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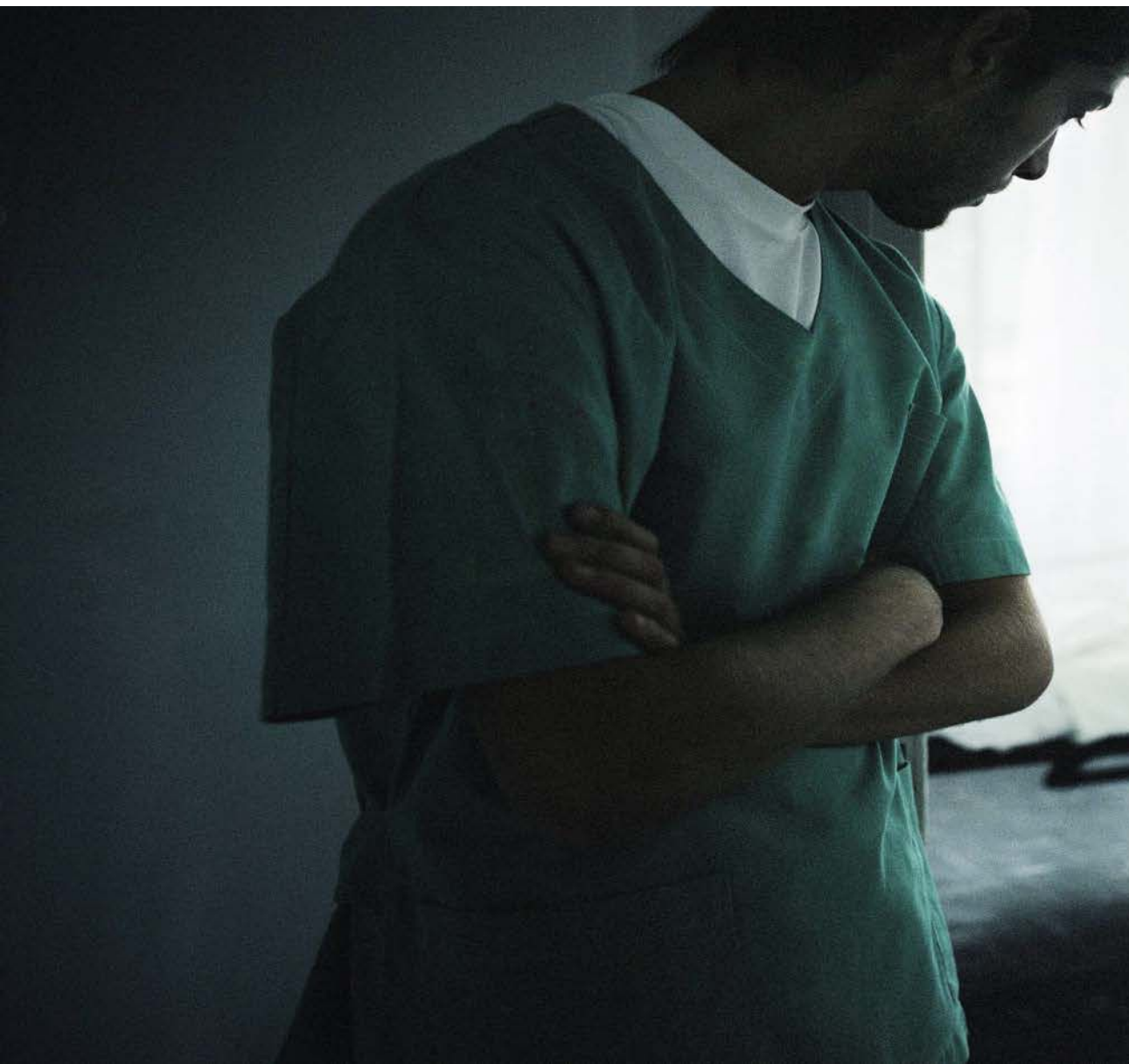
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CONFESSIONS
OF A NIGHT-SHIFT
JUNKIE

Newsweek

FEATURES



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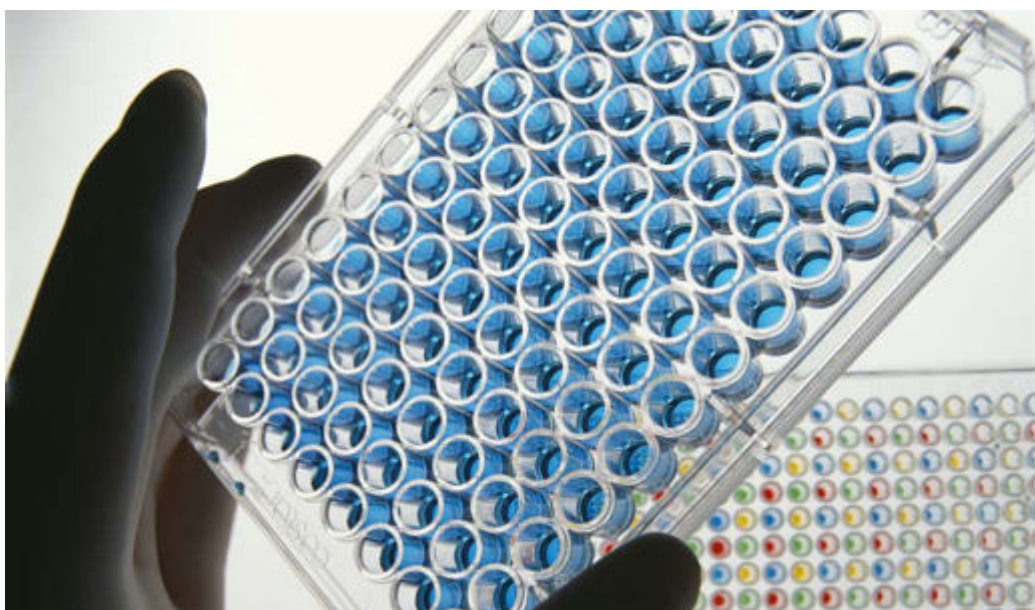
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*VIRSCAN CAN
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DOWNTIME



*MEET BORIS
GREBENSHCHIK
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*YOU TOO CAN
WRITE A BEST-
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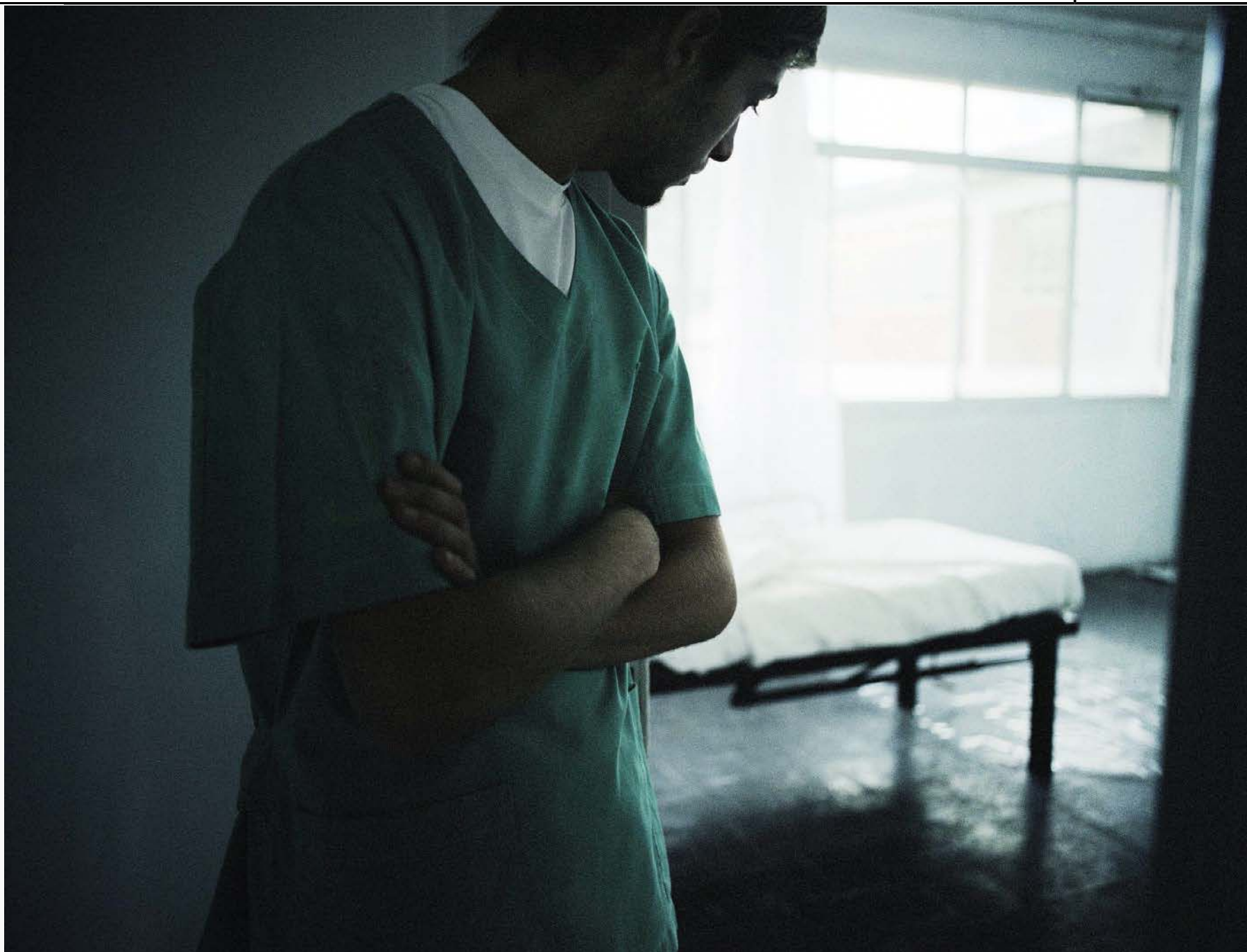


ME TOO-IST!



SPRAY FOR GOOD NEWS





PhotoAlto/Alamy

WHEN DRUG ADDICTS WORK IN HOSPITALS, NO ONE IS SAFE

**MEDICAL TECHNICIAN DAVID KWIATKOWSKI SHARES
HIS NIGHT-SHIFT JUNKIE STORY.**

Gripping the drug-filled syringe, David Kwiatkowski furtively glanced around to confirm that none of his co-workers could see him. Then Kwiatkowski, a radiology technician at Arizona Heart Hospital, darted into an employee locker room, found an empty bathroom stall and

locked himself inside. Sweat dripped from his face, and his stomach churned; he desperately needed a fix. Minutes earlier, he had snagged one of the syringes nurses preloaded with drugs before leaving them unattended in the operating room. It was labeled “fentanyl,” an opiate many times more potent than heroin and Kwiatkowski’s latest narcotic of choice.

It was about 3 o’clock in the afternoon on April 1, 2010, when Kwiatkowski screwed a hypodermic onto the syringe, placed the needle almost flat against his right arm and slid it into a vein. Slowly, he pushed the plunger, eagerly anticipating relief as the 50 micrograms of fentanyl bathed his brain.

Suddenly, he knew something had gone wrong. With only half the dose injected, Kwiatkowski felt a tingle in his feet, then in his hands. This wasn’t fentanyl. The nurses had placed the wrong sticker on the syringe. As his muscles drooped, Kwiatkowski realized he had just injected succinylcholine, a powerful paralytic. That kind of labeling error could have killed a patient. Now, Kwiatkowski knew, he was the one who might die.



David Kwiatkowski, 35, a contract radiology technologist who worked at eighteen hospitals in seven states, was accused of infecting at least 45 people with hepatitis C at hospitals in New Hampshire, Kansas, Maryland and Pennsylvania.

He pulled the syringe out of his arm and dropped it in the toilet before falling face first into the stall's metal door. He hit the ground, and his head flopped out from under the partition. As the drug paralyzed more muscles, Kwiatkowski could no longer breathe, though he was fully conscious. Thirty seconds passed. A medical technician entered the room, saw Kwiatkowski and screamed for help. Just as the technician was preparing to perform CPR, the paralysis eased up. By stopping the injection halfway, Kwiatkowski had taken only a small dose. He took a breath. "Shit," he said. "Shit, I'm going to jail."

A few minutes later, Kwiatkowski sat up and flushed the toilet in hopes no one would find the syringe and suspect he had been using drugs. Junkie logic.

Then there was a blur of activity. A stretcher. The emergency room. The medical technician saw the syringe in the toilet with the fentanyl label still attached. A

representative showed up from Springboard, the Phoenix agency that had placed Kwiatkowski at the hospital. Under questioning, Kwiatkowski spun a ridiculous story filled with lies. Someone called the police, but the hospital refused to cooperate—a good business decision, since an audit two months earlier revealed that a nurse there had been stealing narcotics, and Arizona Heart obviously had not yet fixed the problem. Kwiatkowski left with the Springboard representative, and they drove to a nearby bar.

Downing multiple glasses of Crown Royal whiskey, Kwiatkowski knew his time in Phoenix was over. Drugs and booze had cost him another job, but no matter; that's why he was "a traveler," a technician who agencies place on short-term contracts at hospitals around the country. He knew that, probably out of liability concerns, Arizona Heart would never file an official report that might cost him his radiology tech license; none of the hospitals ever did.

Kwiatkowski returned to his hotel, booted up his laptop and did a quick Internet search. A staffing agency had a listing for a job in Philadelphia. He filled out the online application and went to bed.

The next morning, the telephone rang in Kwiatkowski's hotel room. On the line was a representative from Advantage RN, who said, "Can you start Monday?"

Addicts in Lab Coats

And so it continued, month after month, year after year, as Kwiatkowski crisscrossed the United States, landing temporary jobs at hospitals that soon discovered his drug addictions, then quietly sent him on his way. But what makes this more than just another tale of medical irresponsibility and cover-ups is an alarming fact: Kwiatkowski was one of the 1.5 million intravenous drug users carrying the hepatitis C virus. So in his travels from state to state, he infected scores of people with this potentially fatal disease as syringes he borrowed for his narcotics injections were subsequently used on patients.

This set off a national health crisis, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommending that some 12,000 patients be tested because of their contact with Kwiatkowski's blood; in one of the biggest hepatitis outbreaks in decades, at least 45 people contracted the disease, including one who died.

Still, despite the enormous impact of his cross-country infection spree, Kwiatkowski is no anomaly. According to a recent study by the CDC, nearly 30,000 people may have been exposed to hepatitis C over the past decade by infected hospital employees using narcotics intended for patients. The disease is easy to transmit in a medical setting: Once a drop of blood carrying the hepatitis virus touches something, like a needle or plastic tubing, the organism is difficult to kill. So when an infected health worker steals opiates from patients—usually replacing the clear liquid drugs with saline—the pathogen can settle on any piece of the syringe or even in the liquid injected into the patient. And hepatitis is not the only danger. Last year, an outbreak of a serious bacterial infection that killed one patient at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics was traced to a nurse who stole opiates from syringes.

But infectious exposures are only part of the threat patients face from addicts in lab coats and nursing uniforms. Not all drug diverters—as they are known—carry hepatitis or other diseases. Federal researchers estimate that 100,000 health care workers in the United States are addicts, and their theft of narcotics from patients is believed to be widespread. That fear was reinforced when the University of Tennessee Medical Center cracked down with a tough program to detect drug diverters; in its early days, the effort caught three or four employees stealing narcotics each month. In December 2013, at the University of Michigan Health System, where Kwiatkowski had worked years earlier, a nurse and a doctor overdosed on the same day using pilfered injectable drugs. And for every health care worker replacing

opiates with water or sucking fentanyl out of attachable patches, there are many patients suffering from pain they don't know is untreated.



Credit: PhotoAlto/Alamy

Yet no one has been able to provide a wide-scale inside look at this dirty secret within America's hospitals, primarily since no major drug diverter has ever granted a public interview. That is, until now. In a six-hour, face-to-face discussion and other lengthy communications with Newsweek, David Kwiatkowski laid out the scope of narcotics thefts and cover-ups he witnessed during his nine years working at 19 hospitals in eight states. Thousands of pages of documents—including internal hospital records, correspondence and personnel files; notes of interviews by the FBI; state investigative reports; court filings; and an array of other evidence never before publicly disclosed—back up his account. Kwiatkowski—now serving a 39-year sentence at a maximum-security federal prison for his role in the hepatitis outbreak—told a horror story of addicted health workers wandering hospital wards while stealing drugs,

a tale that perhaps only he has enough detailed personal knowledge to divulge.

Kwiatkowski has nothing to gain from his disclosures; the federal system has no parole. Indeed, both Kwiatkowski and prison officials fear this article might anger other inmates and place him in danger. But Kwiatkowski, who says he is sober for the first time in decades, is haunted by the knowledge that he hurt so many people and believes he needs to make amends by revealing the scope and methods of this medical crime that endangers an unknowing public.

“Somebody has to tell how it’s done, how easy it is and how the structure of the hospitals isn’t any good to stop it,” he says of drug diversion. “And I guess the only guy who can really do that is me.”

A Shot in the Butt

Early on, all Kwiatkowski wanted to do was play baseball. Born and raised in Michigan, he seemed a typical clean-cut boy attending public school. He avoided cigarettes and alcohol; baseball was too important to risk getting thrown off the team. That changed at the end of his junior year of high school. His friends started heading into the woods on weekends, building bonfires and staying out all night drinking. Despite knowing his family’s history of alcoholism, Kwiatkowski joined in. His first drink was from a bottle of Southern Comfort 100 Proof, and he loved it. By senior year, Kwiatkowski was sneaking whiskey every chance he got.

In 1998, his first year at Madonna University, he was getting tanked at least four days a week and discovered he was a mean drunk who got into fights. Then, at sophomore-year party, he met a man 10 years his senior. Through this wealthy new friend, Kwiatkowski joined a circle of boozers and druggies who frequented strip clubs and partied all night. His buddies paid for everything and let him share their never-ending supply of cocaine. Soon he was a full-blown

coke addict who spent his nights prowling techno clubs in downtown Detroit.

He was also getting loaded off opiates prescribed by his doctor. Kwiatkowski suffered from Crohn's disease, a disorder in which the body's immune system attacks the gastrointestinal tract, often causing serious pain. The alcohol and cocaine provided temporary relief, although it ultimately worsened the severe aches and cramps by inflaming the digestive tract. But Kwiatkowski didn't stop getting high and drunk, and instead he persuaded his unsuspecting doctor to write him prescriptions for Vicodin, a narcotic pain reliever.

Despite all the late nights, booze and drugs, Kwiatkowski kept up with his schoolwork. He grew interested in health care and joined a two-year radiology program through the William Beaumont Hospital School of Radiologic Technology while still attending classes at Madonna. In 2003, he graduated from Beaumont, passed his certification test and registered with the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists. Now he could work at any hospital in the country.

He took a full-time job as a radiology technician at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor. That's where his crimes started; he says he learned how to commit drug diversions from a popular nurse there.

At first, Kwiatkowski kept his addictions under control, but the alcohol crept back in. He and two hospital friends started a tradition: After every shift, they would go to a nearby Holiday Inn for beer and eggs. Soon they added whiskey shots to the mix. The three men would stay at the hotel bar for six hours, downing booze as they played Golden Tee Golf, a video arcade game.

As usual, the heavy drinking worsened the pain from Kwiatkowski's Crohn's disease. He started popping Vicodin like candy, but that just made his prescriptions run out faster. Finally, Kwiatkowski told an emergency room nurse about

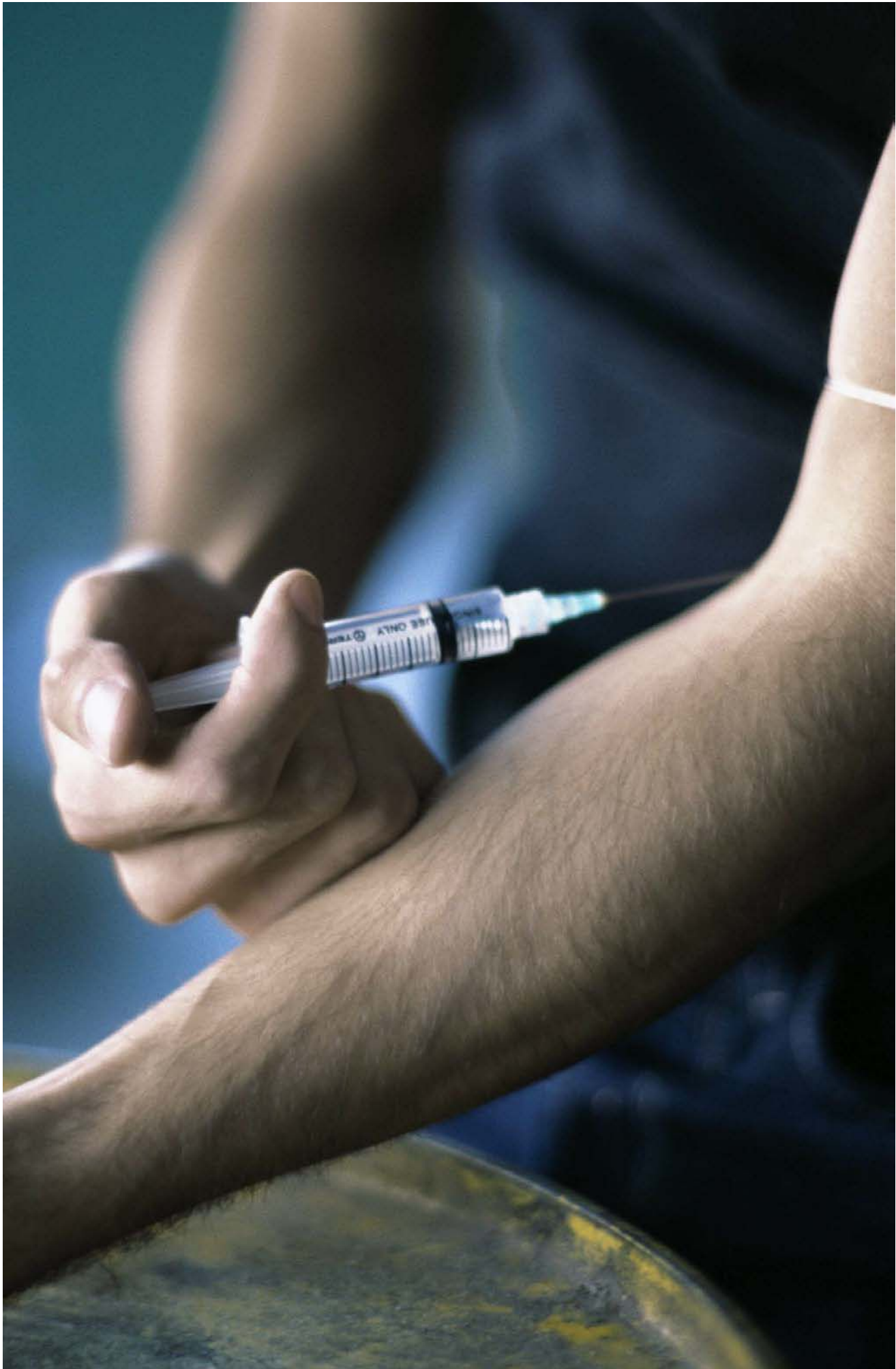
his troubles and asked if he had pills to share. No, the nurse said, but he had a better idea.

“He gave me a shot in the butt,” of a strong narcotic called Dilaudid, Kwiatkowski says. “That’s when it started with the opiates, because it was so readily available.”

Knowing nothing about Kwiatkowski’s drinking or Dilaudid use, his doctor prescribed Percocet, another painkiller, to treat the abdominal discomfort. Kwiatkowski was boozing all morning, grabbing a few hours of sleep, popping a Percocet as he headed to work and then getting a shot of Dilaudid from the ER nurse.

One morning after their shift, that nurse drove Kwiatkowski to Detroit so they could gamble. After pulling into the casino parking lot, the nurse took out a rubber tourniquet, a syringe and a bottle of narcotics stolen from the hospital. The nurse injected the drug into his own arm and closed his eyes for a moment as it started to take effect. Then he turned to Kwiatkowski. “Want some?”

Kwiatkowski said yes, but he didn’t know how to inject himself, so the nurse did it for him. Then they headed into the casino, where they drank and gambled.



A CDC study has found widespread cases of medical workers using hospital drugs as a narcotic. Credit: Galley Stock

The next day, the ER nurse took Kwiatkowski aside.
“Hey, I’m going to leave out a vial in the trauma room after

we leave. Grab it.” When no one was around, Kwiatkowski snatched the small bottle of what turned out to be morphine.

“That was when I started stealing,” he says. It became a routine, with the two men pilfering at least one vial of morphine a day. The nurse had full access to narcotics, but he would be a primary suspect if anyone noticed drugs were missing. Kwiatkowski wasn’t cleared to handle opiates, so he wouldn’t draw suspicion.

After the first couple of months, the quantity of morphine the men stole skyrocketed. For Kwiatkowski, it became as easy as ordering pizza—before work, he would call the nurse and let him know what narcotic he wanted. The nurse set the vials aside, ready for pickup, even before Kwiatkowski arrived at the hospital. By that point, Kwiatkowski was using lots of Dilaudid, taking as much as 30 times the recommended dosage for critically ill patients.

Everything seemed fine, until one morning a hospital security officer stopped Kwiatkowski. “Grab your bag,” he said. “You’re going to human resources.”

At first, Kwiatkowski thought nothing of it. About two weeks earlier, he had totaled his car and missed work. He figured the HR folks wanted to know about that. But as soon as Kwiatkowski walked in the door, a woman said they wanted him to take a drug test. He assumed he had no choice—if he refused, they would fire him. Besides, he hadn’t used any narcotics for a day, so maybe nothing would show up.

They ran the test, then told him to go home and wait for a phone call. Instead, Kwiatkowski drove to the home of his nurse friend, who panicked. “You didn’t tell?” he asked. Kwiatkowski assured him he had said nothing, and the two men sat down and started shooting up Dilaudid.

Soon after Kwiatkowski got home, the hospital called. His test showed high levels of opiates. Strangely, no one told him he was fired, but Kwiatkowski figured he had lost

his job. He called his father, sobbing as he asked if he could move back with his parents for a while.

Then, an idea. He telephoned the HR department at Beaumont Hospital, where he had received his training. He told them he was just finishing up his studies at Madonna University and didn't have a job. Was Beaumont hiring? They seemed delighted—yes, they had job openings; come fill out the paperwork. Relieved to have found work so quickly, Kwiatkowski typed up a résumé, taking care to leave out St. Joe's.

Two weeks passed. Just before he was scheduled to start at Beaumont, St. Joe's HR department called him in. An HR official and a drug therapist interrogated him, telling him they had heard he was stealing drugs and that he had been seen going in and out of the trauma room. And what was his relationship with the ER nurse? Just friends, Kwiatkowski said, and all the other information they had heard was wrong, he assured them.

Well, they said, he didn't have to lose his job. The hospital had a program offering addiction therapy for a year, but he would be required to take drug tests the entire time. If he finished the program, the drug issues would be wiped off his record.

"I don't need it; there's nothing wrong with me," he said. "I quit." What did he care? He already had another job. His drug thefts weren't reported to law enforcement, the federal government or Michigan's Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs.

Kwiatkowski looks back at St. Joe's as the tragic missed opportunity. Had he accepted therapy, the horrific events that followed might never have happened. "They should have called the police," he says. "They should have put a flag on me."

In a statement, St. Joe's says, "We take reporting seriously and comply with all requirements." Moreover, the

hospital confirms that it strives “to work with any employee to receive the treatment they may require, as part of our mission to be a compassionate, healing organization.”



Hospitals keep drugs under lock and key and, for the most part, they are only accessible to a few. The problem arises when drugs are transported from locked cages to operating rooms or when they're not returned to the cage after use. Credit: Gaetan Bally/Keystone/Redux

Kwiatkowski lasted at Beaumont only a few weeks. While no one found out about his drug pilfering, the hospital discovered he had lied about his work history. He turned in his badge and drove home at about 9 o'clock in the morning. Immediately, he got on the Internet, found a position open at Detroit Medical Center and applied—this time including St. Joe's on his résumé.

Fairly soon, he heard back. He got the job.

Free Narcotics

His new hospital assigned him the late shift, ending about 2 a.m., which Kwiatkowski thought was great, since it gave him time to party at the Elysium Lounge, a downtown nightclub. For a couple of hours each night, he downed shots of whiskey at Elysium, then headed home for another

eight or nine hours of drinking and cocaine. But he always stopped by 1 o'clock in the afternoon. After all, he needed time to sober up for work.

He started hitting on some of the pretty nurses, and soon he had a girlfriend. When they were off-duty, she would join him in drinking and smoking marijuana.

Then the cycle started again. The drinking brought back the pain from his Crohn's, but Kwiatkowski didn't consider stopping his massive daily doses of Crown Royal. Not when he knew there was another treatment available—and a nurse who could get it for him. “Hey, you know, I don't want to go to the hospital, but I've been having these pains,” he told his girlfriend. “Is there any way you could hook me up with some morphine or Dilaudid?”

The nurse didn't hesitate. “Sure,” she said. “No problem.”

His girlfriend brought him plenty of narcotics stolen from the hospital, although they made sure never to make the handoff at work—too dangerous. He started shooting up every day. Soon, though, he found he needed more to get high, but he was embarrassed to ask his girlfriend for it. After all, he didn't want her to find out he was a druggie, a thought he now recognizes makes no sense. Instead, he hit up a different friend, who sold him OxyContin, a narcotic in pill form.



Prescription pills containing oxycodone and acetaminophen are among the most popular substances used by medical workers self-prescribing pain relief. Credit: The Canadian Press/Graeme Roy/AP

When he was loaded on drugs, he felt good—worked out at the gym, went out to restaurants, did his job. When the narcotics weren't around, he went into withdrawal and couldn't function. So he would start downing fifths of whiskey, worsening the Crohn's and feeding his craving for more drugs.

Then everything changed. His girlfriend left him, and he received a promotion to the cardiac catheter lab. Kwiatkowski was thrilled. He was now participating in lifesaving procedures and carrying a pager for emergency heart attacks. He decided he wasn't going to blow this opportunity. He quit the narcotics and cut back on the drinking. He found a new girlfriend in the nursing staff of the same department, one who didn't use drugs.

But he started going out to the clubs by himself so he could drink without her seeing him. She complained about his frequent absences, and he worried that all the clubbing might cost him this woman he really liked. Since he couldn't

handle all the alcohol, he turned to the first option that came to mind. He started stealing drugs from the hospital.

It was so easy, he could scarcely believe it. The procedures in his unit often required morphine and other narcotics for patients in pain. Nurses would lay out the bottles of opiates on a counter before catheterization began. Full vials were rarely used; usually, a few milligrams remained inside the bottles once the patients were gone. Afterward, nurses logged how much of the narcotics had been used and how much remained in each bottle. Then, with a witness standing by to make sure the drugs were disposed of, the nurses tossed the bottles into the garbage.

Kwiatkowski would fish the vials out of the trash, pocket them, take them home after work and shoot up in the bathroom so his girlfriend wouldn't see. He had found a source of free narcotics, easy and risk-free. For Kwiatkowski, the whole process was a rush: the stealing, the sneaking around, the surreptitious injections.

But it was then that he had the accident that changed his life. He and a colleague were lifting a patient from a stretcher to a bed in the intensive care unit. Neither noticed that a used needle was under the bed sheet. As they settled the patient, the needle poked Kwiatkowski. He never shared needles with other addicts and always made sure to use new ones on himself. Kwiatkowski believes he contracted hepatitis from that needle-prick in 2006.

Unaware of any new health problems, he and his girlfriend got engaged, and for the first time, Kwiatkowski found a hospital policy he couldn't circumvent: Spouses and fiancées weren't allowed to work in the same department. So he applied in June 2006 for a position at the University of Michigan Health System in Ann Arbor.

Before bringing him on, the university ran a background check and discovered a problem on his official record, one that worried HR. On August 11, Kathleen McCollum, the

hospital's employment office manager, sent an email to Donna Eder, director of human resources in radiology.

A background check found something troubling about Kwiatkowski, McCollum wrote; a misdemeanor traffic violation had resulted in a warrant being issued, probably because the fine hadn't been paid. "This may be something that is resolved but still showing up on his record," she wrote. "But it is probably worth asking him about, so there aren't any surprises down the road."

No Polygraph

The traffic violation problem was easily cleared up, leaving Kwiatkowski set to start his new job on August 21, 2006. Quickly, he discovered that procedures for disposing of drugs were different at this hospital, so his garbage technique wouldn't work. Kwiatkowski was a little nervous about stealing full bottles, so he returned to his old supplier of OxyContin and decided to lay off the injectable narcotics.

Still, what he saw at this new hospital amazed him. Extra medications were checked out from the pharmacy for procedures—far more than could possibly be needed. He saw colleagues pocket bottles, but he had no idea how the missing narcotics weren't showing up in the hospital records. One day, a bottle of fentanyl went, which set off gossip among the staff but not much more. Speaking to a colleague about what he considered to be the hospital's sloppy controls of narcotics, Kwiatkowski said, "This place doesn't even do drug tests."

Then, after just a month on the job, two partially filled vials—one with a narcotic called Versed, the other with fentanyl—disappeared from the procedure room, apparently when the medical staff left the room to get a patient. Linda Campbell, a nurse in radiology, told her boss, and they searched for the missing vials. When they didn't turn up, Campbell called security. The first real drug theft investigation involving Kwiatkowski was about to begin. Security conducted interviews for weeks; while several

employees said they could not vouch for Kwiatkowski, investigators found no evidence he had stolen anything.

A few weeks later, more drugs disappeared. A nurse named Wendy Baker signed out three vials of fentanyl and three vials of Versed; two were used on a patient. Baker hid the remaining four vials in a Kleenex box in the patient's room. When Baker returned from lunch, she discovered the vials were gone.

A nursing manager in the radiology department called security and said she suspected Kwiatkowski. Not only was he new, but she had learned of some problems in his past. She gave no further details.

The next day, two security officers interviewed Kwiatkowski. They told him he didn't have to answer questions and was allowed to leave at any time. "Oh, that's fine," he told them. "I want to help you guys out."

One officer asked if he had taken the vials. Kwiatkowski half smiled and said, "No. No, I didn't do it." Then he chuckled.

Under further questioning, Kwiatkowski said he had no idea who had stolen the drugs, but he had some suspicions. He also said he knew everyone thought he was the thief because he was the new guy. People didn't like him, he said, because he had a lot more training and experience than the rest of the staff. "I feel like somebody's setting me up because they think I'm a big know-it-all."

Kwiatkowski told investigators he had worked at Beaumont and Detroit Medical; he didn't mention St. Joe's. When the officer called HR at Beaumont, he was transferred to a recording saying the hospital did not provide previous employment verification. The person who answered the phone at Detroit Medical also told the investigator the hospital would not give out information regarding a previous employee's resignation or whether the hospital would rehire Kwiatkowski.

Then, on December 7, it happened again. A nurse named Staci Royer obtained a vial of fentanyl, placed it on a desk, then left to get a drink of water. When she returned, the bottle was gone. The staff launched a search; four hours later, the fentanyl was discovered under a towel beneath a cart. Once again, Kwiatkowski was the chief suspect, and he was suspended, pending an investigation. Although Kwiatkowski had earlier offered to take a polygraph, he backed out when a date for a test was set, saying that a lawyer had advised him not to do it.



Fentanyl Citrate, a CLASS II Controlled Substance as classified by the Drug Enforcement Agency, is used in the emergency room often to treat trauma patients. Credit: Joe Amon/The Denver Post/Getty

The security officers pressed him, but Kwiatkowski stayed adamant. Well then, one of the officers said, he must be the one who was stealing the drugs. Then and there, Kwiatkowski decided to quit. The investigation was closed, but since no conclusions had been reached, no formal report about Kwiatkowski was filed with any agency.

There was one other problem, Kwiatkowski says: The hospital never caught the real thief. He hadn't yet grown comfortable with stealing vials from anywhere but the

garbage, which meant a drug addict or dealer was still on staff at the radiology department.

“I want to make an emphasis of this,” Kwiatkowski says. “I did not take anything from the University of Michigan. I’ve admitted to everything, but I won’t admit to that. That was not me.”

‘I Can Get It’

In two weeks, Kwiatkowski landed a job on the midnight shift in the radiology department at Oakwood Annapolis Hospital in Wayne. He started partying again, and his life became a blur of drinking, cocaine, sleep and work. But that didn’t last. A few months after Kwiatkowski started at Oakwood, a manager told him they were sending him to an offsite facility for a drug test. Kwiatkowski refused. Another job gone. And again, no report filed, since no test was run.

That day, when he drove home, he arrived to an empty house. His fiancée had packed up and left. She didn’t want to marry an alcoholic addict. Now, as far as Kwiatkowski was concerned, there was no reason to hold back. He started using more cocaine, drank bourbon by the gallon and hooked up with his old OxyContin connection. Desperately needing money, Kwiatkowski took a job as a day laborer and used the cash for drugs and alcohol.

One afternoon in fall 2007, while downing cheap whiskey, Kwiatkowski saw a website for Advance Med, a staffing company that offered temporary contract jobs with hospitals. He filled out the online form and then took a nap to sleep off the booze. His ringing cellphone woke him up—it was the staffing agency. They asked for more information, then told him there was a job available at St. Francis Hospital in Poughkeepsie, New York, if he could start in a week.

Kwiatkowski agreed. He packed his Pontiac Torrent SUV and drove to Poughkeepsie. He stayed for the length of his short-term contract and then headed back to Michigan.

An uneventful trip, but one that placed him on the radar of staffing agencies around the country that were always on the lookout for medical travelers. The first to call was a company called Maxim Staffing Solutions. The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Presbyterian needed a quick placement. Would Kwiatkowski be willing to go to Pittsburgh?

He drove to Pittsburgh, set up residence in a place arranged by Maxim and started work on March 17, 2008. The first couple of weeks were uneventful; Kwiatkowski was trying, again, to stop the booze and drugs. He befriended a neighbor, a former Marine who also worked at the hospital. One day, the two men were playing on an Xbox when the neighbor asked if Kwiatkowski wanted to do some cocaine. Kwiatkowski asked him if he could also obtain some oxycodone pills. No problem, the guy said. With that, the boozing and drinking began again. He would go to work high, something he had tried to avoid in the past, but now he didn't care anymore.

Then the neighbor came by with a question. Could Kwiatkowski obtain some liquid fentanyl? Kwiatkowski had never used fentanyl, but he had been at this hospital long enough to know how easy it would be to steal the drug. "I can get it," he said.

The hospital kept preloaded fentanyl syringes in the operating room in what was known as a sterile drawer. The syringes were each labeled with a blue sticker to make sure the staff knew they contained that drug. The stickers, though, were available to everyone; Kwiatkowski gathered some and then went to the supply cabinet for an unused syringe—everyone had access to those too. Then he grabbed a bottle of saline, snuck off, loaded the syringe with the harmless water and affixed a blue sticker. He carried that syringe in his pocket until no one was near the sterile drawer. Quickly, he made his move, opening the drawer, dropping in the

saline-filled syringe, then snatching one filled with fentanyl that he would later trade with his neighbor for OxyContin.

A couple of weeks passed, and Kwiatkowski got curious. He liked OxyContin, but why was fentanyl such a popular drug among addicts? So he shot up with a dose. He didn't think it was that great; still, it took the edge off of his drug cravings, so he kept on using.

In May 2008, Kwiatkowski took a fentanyl syringe from the sterile drawer, but he immediately felt worried. He thought someone had seen him do it, so he went to the locker room, squirted the fentanyl into the toilet and tossed the syringe into what is known as the “sharps box” that contained hundreds of used needles.



Used syringes are discarded in a bin at a Vermont medical facility on February 6, 2014. In some hospitals Kwiatkowski employed the help of others for his habit, getting them to stash drugs that he could retrieve later.

Credit: Spencer Platt/Getty

Kwiatkowski was right. Someone had noticed him entering the operating room, lift his shirt and put a syringe in his pants. Thirty minutes later, his manager instructed him to go the head nurse's office. There, several people were waiting, including a hospital security officer. Someone

had seen him steal fentanyl, one official said. Kwiatkowski denied it. The security officer patted him down, found nothing, then he escorted Kwiatkowski to his locker—or at least to the one he was using that day. None of the lockers were assigned, and they couldn't be locked.

Kwiatkowski felt cocky as the officer searched the locker; he knew there was nothing to find. That is, until the officer pulled a glass bottle of morphine off the top shelf. Someone had stolen it and stashed it there.

“What's this?” the officer said.

“I don't know,” Kwiatkowski replied. “You said I was taking fentanyl. Nobody said I took morphine.”

Damn it. There was another drug thief in the OR who, like Kwiatkowski, apparently preferred morphine. While Kwiatkowski knew he was a criminal, he hadn't committed this crime. He was on the hook once again for someone else's theft.

Kwiatkowski was escorted down to the emergency room, where medical staff took blood and urine for a drug test. He decided not to refuse; maybe, he figured, they would come back like St. Joe's with an offer of a year of a drug therapy. The director of interventional radiology arrived and said, “What's going on, Dave?” Kwiatkowski burst into tears. “I've got a drug problem,” he said, explaining that he had become addicted to Vicodin prescribed for his Crohn's disease—oh, and he smoked marijuana. Kwiatkowski had confessed to using a drug he didn't smoke and left out most of the narcotics he was taking.

The next morning, he telephoned a representative from Maxim to tell the staffing agency he had lost his job. They suspected him of stealing drugs and using them, Kwiatkowski said, but it was all bogus. Well, the representative said, Kwiatkowski needed to come down to the Pittsburgh office and take a drug test. Fine, Kwiatkowski said. Kwiatkowski drove to the office and gave

a urine specimen. He was sure he would pass the drug test. Apparently, Maxim wasn't aware that it needed a blood test too. After all, as Kwiatkowski knew, fentanyl—the drug in his system—didn't turn up in urine.

The University of Pittsburgh officially reported to Maxim that Kwiatkowski had been terminated for issues related to narcotics. But Maxim declared him drug-free (incorrectly), did not report he had been fired by the university to any official agency, and put him back on its list of radiology technicians available for hospitals. It never asked officials at the hospital at the University of Pittsburgh what their drug test showed. Kwiatkowski had failed that one; his blood was full of fentanyl.

Ready to Infect

Every chance to stop Kwiatkowski had slipped away. Reports weren't filed, hospitals refused to disclose his drug problems to employers, no one pressed criminal charges, and the wrong drug tests were administered. He had also been moving from hospital to hospital unknowingly carrying the hepatitis C virus, but because of how he had obtained the drugs, he had probably never infected anyone. Had Maxim run a blood test in May 2008—rather than just checking his urine—no one might ever have been infected. But that last chance was lost as Kwiatkowski started using a new technique that left a trail of hepatitis victims.

Fourteen days after his termination from the University of Pittsburgh, Advance Med—another staffing agency—placed him at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Baltimore. He thought the measures there to stop narcotics thefts seemed almost designed to help addicts on staff get their fix. Kwiatkowski had been hired to work in the interventional radiology lab, and whenever a case was scheduled, nurses would prepare the fentanyl syringes hours in advance. If a patient was to be seen at noon, the drugs might be laid out as early as 9 a.m. and left in the procedure room with no one else there.

Kwiatkowski did nothing for a few weeks, but the setup proved too tempting. Day after day, he would walk into the procedure room, pick up a syringe filled with fentanyl and take it into the bathroom. There, he would screw on a needle, inject himself, take the dirty needle off and put it in his pocket for later disposal. He cleaned the syringe, pulling the plunger back and forth to wash it out, then filled it with saline. Afterward, he returned to the procedure room and placed the water-loaded syringe alongside the narcotics. The cleaning attempts, though, were pointless. Even though he removed the needle, even though he washed the syringe, the hepatitis virus could remain attached to the tubing, still alive and ready to infect.

On September 8, 2008, Linwood Nelson, a Vietnam vet, came to the Baltimore VA Medical Center for a thoracic CT scan and received an injection from one of the syringes Kwiatkowski had used that day for his fentanyl fix. As the nurse unknowingly injected water into Nelson's bloodstream, a microscopic hepatitis virus inside the syringe was pumped into his body. The infection can be devastating. It can cause the liver to fail or grow cancer; it is the most common reason for liver transplants in the United States, according to the CDC. Approximately 15,000 people die every year from liver disease related to hepatitis C. Even if the liver doesn't fail completely, the deterioration of its functioning can lead to feelings of overwhelming exhaustion, nausea and serious health problems. Unfortunately, many people with the disease, like Kwiatkowski, feel few if any symptoms until the liver damage has already occurred. Indeed, four years passed before Nelson learned he had been infected.

In a statement, the Baltimore V.A. said that in the years since Kwiatkowski worked there it has adopted a series of automated drug inventory management and software systems designed to prevent drug diversions.

Immediately after Kwiatkowski's contract ended at the VA, Maxim—the staffing agency that knew he had been fired from the University of Pittsburgh hospital—placed him at Southern Maryland Hospital in Clinton. While he was there, Kwiatkowski stole no drugs and spread no hepatitis.

The reason? Southern Maryland employed the simplest and most logical control over its injectable narcotics: Once drugs were out from under lock and key, the nurse kept the syringes or vials in her pocket until it was time to use them. Kwiatkowski says that unless the nurse assigned to carry the drugs stole them, no one on staff could get their hands on narcotics. The pocket system, Kwiatkowski says, was the only safety precaution that ever stopped him.

To keep himself stocked with narcotics, he now needed more money so that, like most addicts, he could buy them outside the hospital. Plus, his drinking was at a peak, which cost a lot too. So Kwiatkowski started falsifying his time sheets. The fourth time, the hospital caught it and fired him. Advance Med, one of the staffing agencies, learned he had been terminated and notified Kwiatkowski that it would not place him anymore.

No matter. Kwiatkowski contacted another agency, Springboard. He faked his credentials—eliminating terminations, resignations, drug tests and all the other problems—and in no time was placed at Maryvale Hospital in Phoenix. Obtaining drugs at Maryvale was simple; three staffers—a patient care provider, an administrator and a security guard—were dealers. From them, Kwiatkowski was able to obtain cocaine, OxyContin and Soma, an addictive oral muscle relaxant that can cause euphoria.



As Kwiatkowski traveled from state to state, he had the luxury of a fresh start but says he always fell in the same self-destructive habits. Credit: Blend

Images/Alamy

By summer 2009, a job opening came up at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. But Kwiatkowski had allowed his Maryland radiology license to expire; he reapplied, lying once again about suspensions and terminations—including the one from a Maryland hospital just a few months earlier. Maryland reissued his license 22 days after he applied.

On July 9, he started at Johns Hopkins—a hospital, he says, that is a drug addict’s dream. “Johns Hopkins is one of the easiest,” he says. “They let the drugs just hang out. You could have had a housekeeper just walk in and get some.” It was little surprise, Kwiatkowski says, that he soon crossed paths with another drug diverter. The two stole narcotics almost every shift they worked, injecting the drugs, changing the needle, replacing the painkillers with saline, then placing the used syringe back with the others ready for use. Kwiatkowski infected at least four patients at Johns Hopkins with hepatitis.

In a statement, Johns Hopkins notes that these events occurred six years ago and says it has continuously updated its procedures ever since. “Patient safety continues to be our top priority,” the statement says. “We regularly re-evaluate, seek and implement new ways to improve our processes.”

After a quick stop at Maryland General, Kwiatkowski was placed at Arizona Heart Hospital by Springboard. It was there that he accidentally injected himself in the bathroom with a paralytic drug, succinylcholine. After a Springboard representative and the police came, Kwiatkowski told a story about finding a fentanyl syringe in a radiology apron and using it on himself—somehow, he thought they’d be less likely to investigate this story. He was right: Arizona Heart not only declined to press charges but also refused to answer any questions from law enforcement.

For the first time, though, a staffing agency took decisive and responsible action. Springboard told Kwiatkowski it would never work with him again, then asked Arizona Heart for any report signed by Kwiatkowski regarding the incident, the names of employee witnesses and blood tests results. Arizona Heart refused to cooperate but said it had reported the event to the state Pharmacy Board—a bizarre move, since that agency regulates pharmacists and their facilities, not other hospital staff.

The stiff-arming from Arizona Heart left Springboard with little to go on. Still, Melissa Arthur, a manager with the staffing agency, wrote a complaint that included a description of what had happened and instructed her staff to send the document to the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT), the licensing board that could pull Kwiatkowski’s license and make sure he never worked again. Springboard faxed the complaint to the ARRT five business days after Kwiatkowski was discovered on the bathroom floor. The notification arrived just in time. That day, Kwiatkowski started at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia, having been placed there by Advantage RN.

Complaint in hand, the ARRT jumped into action and did...nothing. On April 23, 2010—15 days after receiving the complaint—the ARRT Ethics Committee finally sent Kwiatkowski a letter asking for an explanation. He received it in May, while still at Temple. At the time, Kwiatkowski was going cold turkey because Temple kept tight controls on narcotics and he didn't know anyone in Philadelphia who could hook him up.

The letter terrified him. "I could have lost my license right then and there," he says. "So I did a little back research. I tried to find out what [Arizona Heart] reported. [The] hospital never reported it. It was an outside source." That, Kwiatkowski decided, meant Arizona Heart was covering everything up, which told him that whoever had complained wouldn't know the whole story. So, he figured, he could try replying to the licensing board with bald-faced lies and see what happened.

His response to the ARRT arrived on July 2, long after the 30-day deadline had passed, and it was complete fiction. He wasn't feeling well on the day he was found on the bathroom floor, he wrote, and had passed out. He awoke on a stretcher, and people were telling him they found drugs on him—but that wasn't true. He had demanded that the hospital conduct a drug test immediately (while he didn't know what that test showed, he assumed Arizona Heart would refuse to release it). Kwiatkowski also pointed out that Springboard had conducted a urine test, which he passed—not a surprise, since, just like fentanyl, succinylcholine doesn't show up in those.

"I never had any issues before, nor do I want any," he wrote. "Whatever I need to do to continue my love for my job, I will."

The lies were bad enough, but more important was a lethal piece of information he left out of his reply. Two months earlier, despite being notified by Springboard that Kwiatkowski was not rehirable, another medical staffing

agency, Medical Solutions, placed him in a radiology job at Hays Medical Center in Hays, Kansas. While he was there, Kwiatkowski was feeling ill and saw a doctor, who checked his blood. And for the first time, Kwiatkowski learned he was infected with hepatitis C. But that didn't stop him from using syringes loaded with fentanyl; before he left Hays, Kwiatkowski infected at least three patients there.

The ARRT continued its investigation, although using that word to describe what the organization did is more than charitable. It searched for whether Kwiatkowski had a criminal record and found nothing; it checked if he was licensed. On July 16, 2006—98 days after Kwiatkowski had collapsed at Arizona Heart—a paralegal at ARRT requested a copy of the police report. On September 27, the police replied, saying no report existed because Arizona Heart had refused to press charges. Although Springboard provided the name and badge number of the officer who had spoken to Kwiatkowski, no one from the ARRT called him. On January 26, 2011—almost 10 months after Kwiatkowski was discovered on the bathroom floor at Arizona Heart—the ARRT Ethics Committee recommended no action be taken against him.

And throughout that inquiry into the episode at Arizona Heart, officials from staffing agencies and hospitals called the ARRT whenever they considered hiring Kwiatkowski, just to make sure there was nothing bad on his record. Each time, the ARRT gave Kwiatkowski the all-clear, allowing him to move on to the next hospital where he could steal drugs and infect patients.

“We would not have indicated to an outside third party that there's an ongoing investigation,” Barbara Kummer, ethics investigation coordinator at the ARRT, later testified in a deposition.

He Waited to Die

On July 13, 2012, Kwiatkowski sat down on the bed in a dingy hotel room in Marlborough, Massachusetts. That

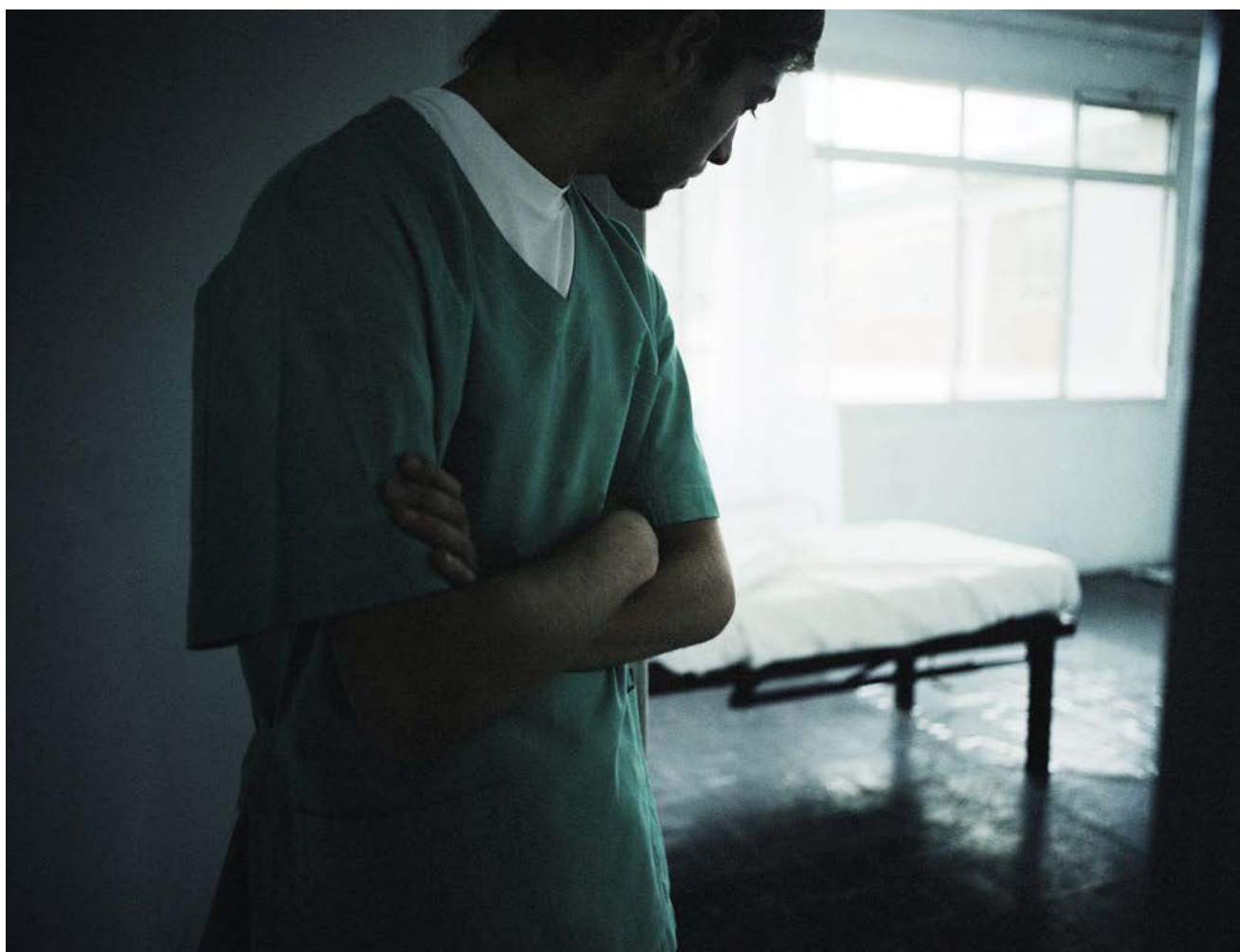
day, he had gotten a haircut, gone to a tanning salon and sent flowers to both his girlfriend and his mother. He wanted to look good and have things in order after his suicide. He popped open three bottles of pills, including anti-psychotics and blood pressure medications, and downed hundreds of them while swigging from a bottle of vodka. Then he lay down and waited to die.

He knew his years of secrets were about to be exposed. For more than a year, he had worked at Exeter Hospital in Exeter, New Hampshire, using his favorite technique for stealing drugs: injecting himself with preloaded syringes, washing them out, filling them with saline and putting them back. Just like at almost every other hospital where he had worked, he knew other staff members were stealing narcotics too, so he didn't think what he was doing was so terrible. But in May 2012, a patient there was diagnosed with hepatitis. Then a second. And a third. And the hospital also discovered Kwiatkowski was infected with the virus.

On May 15, Exeter reported the outbreak to the state Division of Public Health Services, which in turn called in the CDC. Then the FBI joined in. CDC investigators said they were certain the multiple infections had been caused by a hospital worker's drug diversions. Kwiatkowski denied he had been stealing drugs, denied that he had hurt anyone, but during an interview with law enforcement on July 2, he said he had "lied to a lot of people" and "fabricated my life." He admitted to deceiving colleagues and friends about his fiancée, saying she had died in a car crash, and falsely claiming he had played baseball with the University of Michigan. But in the same interview, he lied about his narcotics use. He also falsely stated he had only discovered he was infected in May, when the Exeter outbreak began. An agent asked Kwiatkowski how he thought patients had contracted the disease.

"You know, I'm more concerned about myself, my own well-being," he replied. "That's all I'm really concerned

about, and I've learned here to just worry about myself, and that's all I really care about now."



Drugs are plentiful in hospitals and as David Kwiatkowski, a former health worker, tells Newsweek, it's easy to score a high and much easier still to get away with it as hospitals rarely report the crime. Credit: PhotoAlto/Alamy

But playing the victim didn't work, and with the numbers of the infected growing, Kwiatkowski knew he would probably go to prison. He decided death was a better choice. After taking the pills, he started sobbing, and a short time later, a housekeeper walked in. Paramedics were called, and they took him to nearby Marlborough Hospital. Once he was well enough, he telephoned his parents from his hospital bed. They promised they would come see him as fast as they could.

On July 19, he heard from his parents. They had just landed at the airport and would be at the hospital in 30 minutes. "OK," Kwiatkowski said. "I can't wait to see you."

He hung up the phone, and the door to his hospital room flew open. Federal agents with guns drawn swarmed in

—from the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Marshals Service. The room filled up with law enforcement, while the patient in the next bed watched in wonder. Someone handcuffed Kwiatkowski to his hospital bed and read him his Miranda rights. He confessed to everything. He acknowledged swapping out syringes in the manner that put people at risk of contracting his virus at least 100 times.

Almost immediately after the news of Kwiatkowski's arrest went public, the director of clinical services with Maxim—the staffing agency that had placed Kwiatkowski at several hospitals—dummied up a bogus email that, if true, would prove the company had reported Kwiatkowski on March 9, 2009. (Almost four years later, the fake email was produced in response to a subpoena issued by Maryland investigators; Maxim acknowledged three months afterward that the purported email was a fake.)

As health officials discovered dozens more people infected with the same hepatitis virus carried by Kwiatkowski, he pled guilty to 14 federal charges filed against him in New Hampshire and another two in Kansas. He faced a maximum of 40 years in prison.

By the day of Kwiatkowski's sentencing, December 2, 2013, 45 of his victims had been found, including one who had died after being infected at Hays in Kansas. As Judge Joseph Laplante of the Federal District Court in Concorde listened to the prosecutors and defense lay out Kwiatkowski's crimes, he grew perplexed. Why didn't the hospitals and staffing agencies that figured out what was going on treat it like a criminal issue rather than a personnel problem? No one could provide an answer.

After that, one at a time, Kwiatkowski's victims stepped forward to describe what he had done to them and their loved ones. They told of lives destroyed, how they all knew they faced a death sentence as their livers grew increasingly impaired. Some said they were hospitalized all the time

because of damage from the infections; one said he felt so sick and fatigued all the time that he wanted to die.

“The hatred for you, Mr. Kwiatkowski, from our family alone is immeasurable,” said Kathleen Murray, a daughter of Lucy Starry, who had been infected at Johns Hopkins and was too sick to travel to the sentencing. “You may only be facing drug charges, but make no mistake, you are a serial killer. Someone has already died. Many more will.”

Donald Page, who had contracted the virus at Exeter, offered no comments to the court. Instead, he simply stared at Kwiatkowski and spoke three sentences. “I just want to look at the man that killed me,” he said. “You killed me. Do you have anything to say to me?”

“I’m sorry,” Kwiatkowski said. “I’m terribly sorry.”

After more than an hour of wrenching comments from Kwiatkowski’s victims, Judge Laplante passed down a sentence of 39 years, one less than the maximum. He said he had left off that single year so it would be a constant reminder to Kwiatkowski that human beings could show compassion, something he had failed to do. And with that, Kwiatkowski said goodbye to his parents and was taken away by the federal marshals.

In late 2014, I was in the large visitor area at Hazelton maximum-security prison in West Virginia. I was the first person to come see Kwiatkowski during his incarceration; his family and friends have all cut him off. I had been exchanging emails and letters with Kwiatkowski for months, and he had finally agreed to speak with me face-to-face. Prison officials objected, saying they feared other inmates would harm Kwiatkowski if this article ran because of the number of innocent people hurt by his crimes, but after more months of negotiations, agreed to allow a meeting.

After about 20 minutes, a guard unlocked a metal gate and escorted Kwiatkowski into the room. I was shocked by his appearance. At the time of his sentencing, he looked fat

and sickly. In just two years, he had lost 70 pounds and the sallow skin tone, and he appeared quite healthy.

We spoke for six hours, and at the end of our time together I mentioned that he seemed well. “Since I’ve been locked up, I haven’t thought about drugs or alcohol. This place saved my life,” he said. “I’m back to the person, right now, that I was before I started drinking in high school.”

Once we finished, the guards reappeared. “You make sure you tell them how sorry I am,” he said to me as he was escorted away. “I’m trying to make up for what I did. I’m so sorry.”

And with that, Kwiatkowski was led away, back to one of the prison cells where he will likely remain for the rest of his life.



Alexander Nazaryan/Newsweek

ROUTE 50: DRIVING AMERICA'S 'LONELIEST ROAD'

**NEVADA'S ROUTE 50 PLUNGES THE INTREPID DRIVER
INTO AN EXHILARATING EXPANSE OF NOTHINGNESS.**

Driving is one of the dreaded chores of the modern American experience. Few do it with pleasure or for pleasure. It is often expensive and sometimes dangerous. The most common rejoinder, to one who fears airline flight, is that a Toyota is far more lethal than a Boeing.

And far less awesome. Soon enough, Google's integrated circuits will navigate I-95 more smoothly than you or I ever could. There will then come a time, and come soon, when a teenager accustomed only to the gentle purr of an iAuto will listen to "Born to Run" and feel no goose bumps from Bruce Springsteen's growling evocation of highways "jammed with broken heroes on a last-chance power drive," for the only highways known to this coddled and hapless youth will be the sleek, "smart" roads of the pixelated age: Facebook Freeway, Apple Turnpike, Cloud Storage Solutions Highway. He will coast along in perfect safety, perfectly bored.

"I preferred reading the American landscape as we went along," says Sal Paradise, the narrator of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. He has a French novel, stolen in Hollywood, but as his bus rolls east from California, he is transfixed by the view. "Every bump, rise, and stretch in it mystified my longing. In inky night we crossed New Mexico; at gray dawn it was Dalhart, Texas; in the bleak Sunday afternoon we rode through one Oklahoma flat-town after another; at nightfall it was Kansas. The bus roared on...."

On the Road was published in 1957, at about the height of America's postwar majesty, when you could wax Whitmanesque about the whole vast place without coming off as a master ironist. But unlike old Walt, you didn't laze about observing spears of summer grass; you hopped into a Cadillac Eldorado, roaring West at a not-very-green 9 miles per gallon, Frankie Avalon crooning into the wind. To Sal and his benny-addled bunch, Route 6 and its fellow byways are the American version of the Khyber Pass, the Camino de Santiago, the Orient Express. Whatever way the compass points, the true direction of the journey is always inward, ever deeper into the infinite soul of the land.

The year before Kerouac published the novel that made him famous, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the Federal Aid Highway Act, which created the interstate

system of roads, now 46,876 miles in length, about twice the circumference of the Earth. The interstate system replaced an older network of two-lane blacktops called the U.S. Numbered Highway System, inaugurated in 1926. Today, these are the lesser roads known as “U.S. Routes,” designated with a black-and-white shield. The most famous of these old roads are probably the Lincoln Highway, which was the first to connect the coasts, and Route 66, from Chicago to Santa Monica, the “Mother Road” that signaled the ascendancy of the Mountain West and the Pacific Coast in the American imagination. There are others too, nearly as legendary: the Pacific Coast Highway, which traces the craggy convolutions of the California coastline; the Blue Ridge Parkway, plunging boldly into the secret heart of Appalachia; the Historic Columbia River Parkway, blazing through the lush sublimity of Oregon.

And then there is Route 50, a black ribbon that stretches from Ocean City, Maryland, to Sacramento. “For the unhurried, this little-known highway is the best national road across the middle of the United States,” wrote William Least Heat-Moon in *Blue Highways*, his classic 1982 account of driving the nation’s back roads in search of the nation’s heart. Fifteen years later, Time magazine called this same strip of pavement “The Backbone of America” in a cover story that was part travelogue, part sociopolitical pulse-taking. It is a long backbone, 3,007 miles in length, its vertebrae etched with names like Loogootee, Pruntytown, Poncha Springs and Majors Place.



Credit: Alexander Nazaryan/Newsweek

The most famous segment of Route 50 is largely useless, running through Nevada about 100 or so miles south of I-80, which is what sane people use today to travel the state (sane people of means simply fly). And yet this 287-mile stretch between Fernley, near the border with California, and Ely, near the border with Utah, has attained legendary status as the “Loneliest Road in America.” The designation was made by Life magazine in 1986 and has stuck, in good part because Nevada tourism authorities recognized what the acolytes of ruin porn have long known about the strange magic desolation works on the human spirit. There are, today, “Loneliest Road” signs along the road, and some stores in the sparse towns along Route 50 display “I survived Route 50” signs in windows covered with geologic layers of grime.

You can even get a slick “survival guide” to the road, which the governor of Nevada will supposedly sign if enough businesses along the way stamp its passport-like pages. This is a transparently cheesy gimmick, but given

some of the spiky characters who populate towns like Eureka and Austin, it is not without its attendant dangers.

Nor is the road exactly bumper-to-bumper with tourists, despite an impressive marketing effort by the aforementioned Nevada officials. I drove it alone, from Delta, on the Utah side of the border, to Sacramento, where Route 50 terminates in the bleak outer edges of the city. I suspect that most of those who choose to drive the “Loneliest Road” want true loneliness, which friends and lovers and little children and chatty cousins would surely ruin. So would the sound of a radio; though I spent some of the drive listening to a Jon Krakauer audiobook, I often drove along in silence, convinced that this is how they would want me to do it, they being both the Nevada tourism savants and Sal Paradise, whispering in my ear about “the magic land at the end of the road.”

‘We Warn All Motorists...’

It was about a week after driving Route 50 from Utah to California that I actually managed to find the famous Life magazine article that made this stretch of blacktop world-infamous. A sallow, straw-haired librarian at the Sacramento Public Library set down a box of issues from the mid-’80s, and I flipped lazily through them, past advertisements for healthful menthol cigarettes and articles about the Soviets’ incipient plans for nuclear war.

The “Loneliest Road” appeared in the July 1986 issue of Life, which shows the Statue of Liberty on its cover. Given how many times the “Loneliest Road” moniker has been repeated in popular culture, and how often it is cited on Internet travel guides, as if it were some kind of official designation, I figured its origin was something expansive and brutal, a missive from a latter-day James Agee or Dorothea Lange.

No such luck. There was only a single photograph. A car recedes into the distance, while in the foreground a rancher crosses the road on a horse. Both car and man-horse duo

are moving with their own purpose, independent of each other. There is no hurry, as if the photograph were capturing timelessness itself.



A cut out plywood cowboy stands in front of the only gas pump for a 112 mile stretch at Middlegate Station along Route 50. Middlegate Station is home to 19 people who live behind the main building which sports a bar, restaurant, gas and a hotel. Credit: Ty Wright

Below the photograph is a caption that says, “The Loneliest Road.” I had found the origins of the river, the secret spring of legend. There followed, beneath the caption, a single paragraph:

||

“It’s totally empty,” says an AAA counselor. “There are no points of interest. We don’t recommend it.” The 287 mile-stretch of U.S. 50, running from Ely to Fernley, Nev., passes nine towns, two abandoned mining camps, a few gas pumps and an occasional coyote. “We warn all motorists not to drive there,” says the AAA rep, “unless they’re confident of their survival skills.”

So this was it. I had wondered, when first reading about Route 50, why this one deeply concerned AAA official was always cited: Had Life spoken to no one else? Had there not been a single booster for this maligned highway?

Now I saw that there had been no one else, only this AAA “counselor.” He was the only guest at this desert party. And what had become of him, anyway? Did he know that his warning had been responsible for a boomlet of Nevada tourism? That he had made popular the very road he warned

people away from? That what he said seriously has been taken ironically, that his words were the ones that spawned countless car journeys, including my own?

A few have even taken to complaining about how popular Route 50 has become, like some forlorn section of Detroit suddenly colonized by hipster farmers. “Making my third Highway 50 traverse,” **wrote a reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle in 2004**, “I realized the secret is out.”



Nevada embraced the moniker of the loneliest road in America and tried to turn it into a tourist attraction. Credit: Alexander Nazaryan/Newsweek

Well, a decade later, the secret hasn't made it very far. You don't have to be Lawrence of Arabia to cross Nevada in a car, but the journey does require a very specific skill set: sitting for a very long time, knowing where the next gas station is; knowing how to find NPR amid the desert's FM fuzz; and most important of all, knowing how to be alone.

After my first day on the road, I texted some details of the trip to a colleague back in New York who had done the same journey years before. He wrote back, “It's strange

right? A lot of time way inside your head.” Way inside being the operative phrase there. Way, way inside.

Hello? God?

The land between the Wasatch Mountains, which cradle Salt Lake City, and the Sierra Nevada, which shields California from the rest of the country, is called the Great Basin. Its 113,144 square miles contain much of the American West, a vast “sagebrush ocean,” in the words of Utah naturalist Stephen Trimble. The water that comes into the Great Basin does not flow into rivers. Instead, it simply evaporates or seeps into the salt beds. That makes it one of the largest endorheic watersheds in our little swath of the globe, a huge, rusty tub under a blazing, uncovered lamp.

Nevada is located in a part of the Great Basin called the Basin and Range Province, one enormous geological phenomenon within another. Imagine an old man wrinkling his forehead and you have the topography of Nevada, north-south mountain ridges with valleys in between. The 19th century archaeologist C.E. Dutton described the mountains of the Basin and Range as “an army of caterpillars crawling northward out of Mexico.” To drive across Nevada is to squish the caterpillars with the tires of your car, one after another.

You cross more than a dozen mountain ranges as you traverse the state, climbing up into the red rock heights, then dipping down into the patchy desert of the valley floor. This had been the route of the Pony Express, and vestiges of that Snapchat, alpha version, can still be seen along the road, crumbling piles of rock conquered by the relentless creep of sand and grass. Later, Route 50 across Nevada became coterminous with the Lincoln Highway. Crossing the desert in a Model T Ford would have required survival skills, not to mention quite a bit of time, and given the lack of radio, a prolonged comfort with your own neurochemistry that Spotify wasn’t around to alleviate.

Once in a while, curiosity tugged at the steering wheel. Outside the town of Austin, I pulled off the road to search for the Spencer Hot Springs. It had been a day of too much beef jerky, too many energy drinks and too much silence. To bathe in nature's lukewarm and restorative waters would be a perfectly salvific conclusion to a day of claustrophobic motion. And the proprietor of the Cozy Mountain Motel had made the springs seem only a short distance from the main road.

This was not the case. Following the scant directions printed on a roadside sign, I turned on a gravel road, then another gravel road, until suddenly I was on no road at all, surrounded on all sides by sagebrush. I saw no markings or signs, only the dust that rose from my wheels in a swelling, occluding storm. I consulted my phone, which returned only the dreaded "no service" message. Deep breath. The dust around my car settled, and I saw only the ancient desert, and beyond the desert the hills, and somewhere in the hills, where long ago Indians had carved petroglyphs, there was a road leading back to civilization, but unless some satellite high above shifted into auspicious position, I might become just another skeleton desiccating under the sun.



A deer lie dead along the side of the road on Route 50 outside of Ely, Nevada. The blood stain on the pavement indicates that it was struck by a vehicle. Credit: Ty Wright

As if some cosmic force sensed my fears and wanted to confirm them, the sun blazed with particular cruelty, so bright that it hampered vision, reducing the landscape to a brown haze. Nothing moved. “A soul-shattering silence,” the physicist Freeman Dyson once wrote of the Nevada desert. “You are alone with God in that silence.” I was not ready to consort with my maker just yet and, revving the car again, maneuvered frantically down the gravel paths until, in the distance, I saw the glint of a truck crawling slowly into the furnace of the late Nevada afternoon.

I don’t mean to be needlessly dramatic, but one should always give the desert its due. In 1999, **a recent college graduate named Raffi Kodikian stabbed his friend David Coughlin to death in the tent they were sharing in the Rattlesnake Canyon of New Mexico.** Kodikian would later claim that he killed his friend only to save him. He wrote in his journal, “We will not let the buzzards get us alive.”

The tragedy of Coughlin's death was compounded by the fact that the two men, neither a seasoned outdoorsman, were never more than a mile from where they had parked their car. The desert, constitutionally incapable of forgiveness, punished them deeply for their inexperience. It has no reason to show any one of us more mercy.

Renewed in the Wild

Sometime in the eighth decade of the fourth century, a pious Christian named Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus decided to head out into the Syrian desert. He believed this would make him a better servant of God: "O desert nourishing the flowers of Christ! O solitude which produces the firm rocks with which the city of the Great King is constructed," he would later write. During his sojourn in the pitiless desert, the faithful hermit purified his faith in God. Today, we know the desert wanderer as St. Jerome, one of the Four Fathers of the Catholic Church.

Not all of us go into the desert to become saints. Some of us go simply to become human, which today might mean nothing more than a couple of days without wireless service. The desert is one of the last great repositories of pure silence, which has become as commodified as a truffle in a world that constantly dings and pings and yaps for your attention. A couple of years back, a Brooklyn restaurant achieved short-lived notoriety by mandating that diners not talk at all during their meals. At around the same time, Susan Cain's *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* was becoming an international best-seller.

I suppose, then, that Route 50 can be considered a meditation retreat with a speed limit—mindfulness at 100 miles an hour. That isn't the posted limit, of course, but I didn't encounter a single highway trooper in two days of driving. The only traffic-calming measures in Utah and Nevada appear to be the tumbleweeds that burst every so often across the road, threatening to lodge in some crucial component of your car's undercarriage and catch

fire. Otherwise, it's just you and Nevada's endless sine curve. You can't ever quite tune out, but the nerve-fraying experience of trying to navigate five measly blocks of Broadway at rush hour is replaced by an uninterrupted calm. Sometimes, as I drove, I felt as if I were floating. I would look down at the speedometer as the needle crept with smooth confidence toward triple digits. But I wasn't being careless or reckless. I wasn't rushing. I did not need to make good time. I did not want to make good time. I was doing only what the road wanted me to do.



Sheep graze in front of a mountain range outside of Eureka, Nevada.

Credit: Ty Wright

I rarely stopped during the two-day journey. Not because I had anywhere to be, but because the thwack of rubber on asphalt was a sort of symphony, and to disrupt that music would be like taking a phone call during Beethoven's Fifth. There was, moreover, something psychologically unpleasant about stopping, as I discovered when I pulled over near Sand Mountain, in Nevada, and walked across some roadside salt flats that had the appearance of a Siberian tundra, white in every direction, the supreme white that, as Herman Melville

wrote, “shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe.”

Stepping out of my rental after several hours of driving was like launching into space. The silence crashes over you, overwhelms you like a sudden change in atmospheric pressure. It is better to keep moving, I concluded, to ride the silence like a wave, an awesome force that is neither malevolent nor gentle. The silence of the desert has been around for millions of years. You will not disturb it much. And so I kept moving, past Sand Mountain, toward Fallon, Carson City, South Lake Tahoe, back into the restless noise of the modern world.

But even once I was in Sacramento, refreshing my iPhone news apps and making the necessary ministrations to my social media accounts, the desert stayed with me. Not as an experience harrowing or triumphant or worthy of let’s-have-another-beer storytelling, but as a place I had not known but would never forget, a tattoo on my city slicker’s psyche.

In 1960, the great Western writer Wallace Stegner wrote what has come to be known as the “**Wilderness Letter**” to a young Berkeley conservationist. Stegner argued that the preservation of wilderness is necessary because wildness is a crucial aspect of the American soul. The American, he wrote, “is a civilized man who has renewed himself in the wild.”

The restorative power of nature has become a tired concept, laden with the glib promises of eco-hotels and yoga retreats: Pay us to make you pure, they all whisper from behind their reclaimed-bamboo screens. I don’t think this is what Stegner had in mind. For him, the wilderness ought to remain “a lovely and terrible wilderness, such as wilderness as Christ and the prophets went out into,” a desert illumed by torches, not aromatherapy candles.

‘A Sinkhole for Curious Ideas’

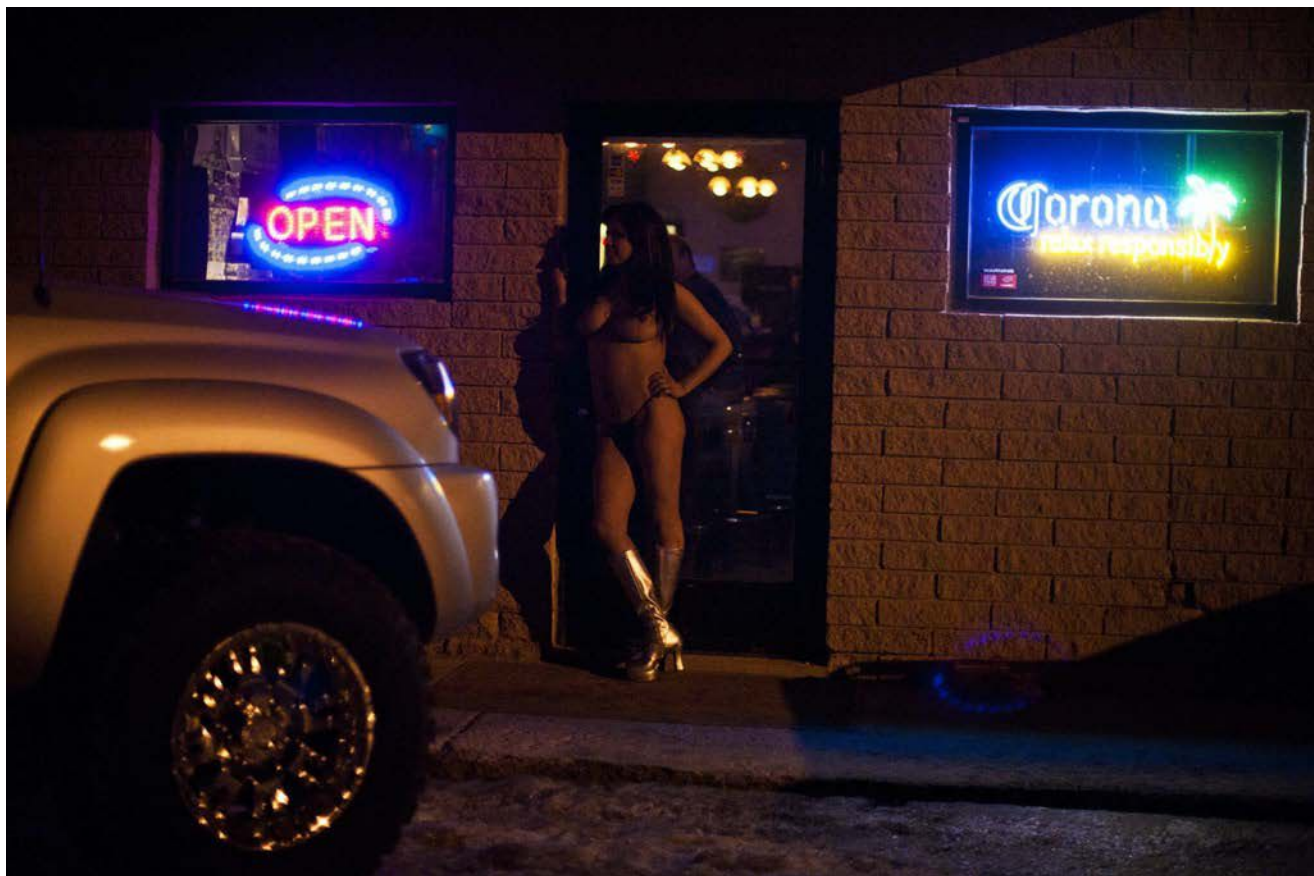
You can thank our Jeffersonian system of states' rights for the fact that each state has its own identity, its own politics and culture. The distance between Vermont and New Hampshire is immense, despite the 275 miles of border those two tiny states share. This patchwork nation, with its variegated geography and ethnic constitution, makes it alluring to visit all 50 states in the way that, I am pretty sure, nobody ever dreams of visiting all of Sweden's 25 provinces. In my native Soviet Union, I can't recall anyone boasting of having traveled through all of the "stans." If you traveled through all of the "stans," you were probably a nuclear scientist or a spy.

As a non-native American who grew up on cowboy fiction very poorly translated into Russian ("Howdy, partner" doesn't Slavicize well), I'd willfully retained an image of the American West as a romantic repository of the nation's fundamentally un-European spirit. I had done the tourist thing in scruffy Albuquerque and yuppie Taos, New Mexico; the artisanal sausage thing in Denver and artisanal beer thing in Boulder, Colorado; and the driving really, really fast thing in Arizona. Only Nevada remained unexplored.

To reach Route 50 from Salt Lake City, you first drive south on Interstate 15, turning off shortly after passing through Provo. This is the heart of Mormon country, but it is more than that: Provo is one of the few places in the United States where Google Fiber is available, and the surrounding area has been called "the next Silicon Valley" by The New Yorker and other outlets. Between the tech scene in the south and the skiing in the north, Utah has managed, despite its reputation for piety and probity, to market itself as a cool Western state. (The Sundance Film Festival probably helps too.)

Nevada is a stranger, more malevolent beast. It is much bigger than Utah and slightly less populous, giving it some of the lowest population density in the United States. In the

popular imagination, Nevada is a repository for casinos (Las Vegas) and nuclear waste (Yucca Mountain), a gamble of its own. It is home to not only the “Loneliest Road in America” but also the Extraterrestrial Highway, a stretch of Route 375 along which alien spaceship sightings are common, if not credible. Nevada is a place, then, where you may consort with your thoughts or with visitors from Jupiter. You may also consort with a lady of the evening: Nevada is the only state where prostitution is legal.



A "working girl," takes a break and stands outside the Big Four Ranch in Ely, Nevada along Route 50. Credit: Ty Wright

Route 50 is part of this lore but has a lore all its own. The “Loneliest Road” is an artery rich with the mythical nutrients of the American West, the one not yet ravaged by Wal-Mart and methamphetamine. No matter how fast your car is hurtling forward, you will always be traveling back in time.

This is the true Nevada, the one that has lured generations of those touched with a romantic spirit, the one that has nothing to do with blackjack or Harry Reid. Cheryll Glotfelty, in her anthology *Literary Nevada*, notes that the

emptiness of Nevada is maybe its most attractive quality (Las Vegas and surrounding Clark County account for about 70 percent of the state's population). She cites the British writer J.B. Priestley, who wrote in 1937, "We traveled for hours and hours along narrow dirt roads through the high emptiness of Nevada. Anybody who is under the impression that the world is becoming too crowded should move into Nevada. A road there seems to lead endlessly from nothing to nothing."

Perhaps because both nature and the human mind abhor a vacuum, Nevada has become a repository for conspiracy theories, the foremost among them centered on Area 51, where some think the American government has long harbored evidence of extraterrestrial contact. Reporting for Time back in 1997 for its Route 50 issue, the novelist Walter Kirn wrote that "Nevada's Great Basin is a paranoid Holy Land, and no place better suited for the job...a sinkhole for curious ideas."

I got to hear some of those curious ideas from the Serbian owner of the International Cafe & Bar in Austin, a ramshackle building whose smoky, crepuscular interior hid a handsome 19th century bar that was like the only gorgeous woman in a room of wrinkled spinsters. The owner spoke with a strange accent, a mixture of Southern Europe and central Nevada. He had ideas about "Barack Hussein Obama" and about how drunken driving laws were a conspiracy (but of course!) between law enforcement and insurance companies. Pouring me a syrupy Serbian brandy I had not asked for, he regaled me with theories of race relations that seemed to borrow equally from Sean Hannity and Adolf Hitler. Whether he was paranoid, insane or drunk I don't know, but no amount of alcohol could make his diatribe bearable. I ended the night in the Cozy Mountain Motel, eating beef jerky and drinking beer from a plastic cup, a man alone on the "Loneliest Road," lonely and loving it.

Exalted Emptiness

The high desert is austere but never plain. Birds flit, grasses sway. Shadows flirt with red rocks, and where trucks traverse dirt roads in the distance, clouds of dust follow them, as if the Tasmanian devil of cartoon fame were giving chase. Abandoned farmhouses stand on their final wooden legs, testifying to lives that were surely hard and probably short. Cows mulch. Cars whiz by, and you momentarily feel the kinship with a fellow human being. But then the car passes, your own car shakes from the pneumatic force of the turbulence, and you are totally alone again.

To travel the “Loneliest Road” is to prove King Lear’s maxim that nothing will come of nothing. For large swaths of road, the nothingness is utterly uninterrupted, giving birth only to more of itself, an emptiness so vast it is impossible not to be awed by it, the exalted emptiness of Kierkegaard and Sartre, the emptiness that may make us all better people if we stopped to ponder its philosophical implications for a moment. I have never understood the claim, routinely made by visitors to New York, that they are made to feel insignificant by the towers of Manhattan; humans built them, humans work in them, humans can pay \$15 to ride up to their observation decks and look down at the surface of the Earth 1,000 feet below. If anything, the towers of Manhattan affirm humanity’s powers. The desert, which existed before us and will exist after us, affirms humanity’s insignificance.



The "HOT" on the marque sign for Hotel Nevada are burned out as it stands during the cold winter months in Ely, Nevada. The hotel serves road trippers, businessmen and locals with a full bar, casino and restaurant. During the 1940's Hotel Nevada was deemed the tallest building in Nevada standing six stories tall. Credit: Ty Wright

The towns along Route 50 are notable not only for their smallness but for their rarity. Some of them are merely a rest stop with a restaurant attached. Eureka advertises itself as “the Friendliest Town on the Loneliest Road in America.” I never did discover whether that was true. Austin claimed, on a billboard, that there was “so much to do” within its 1.1 square-mile confines. This I can confidently say is hyperbole, though of the harmless sort (except for the racist Serb; seriously, stay away from the racist Serb). Carson City, near Lake Tahoe, is a true American dump, but you can buy the temporary companionship of a woman at the Sagebrush Ranch, a gun at the Half Cocked Armory, then gamble away what remains in your wallet at the Gold Dust West casino. Best of all, most towns along Route 50 do not peter out into strip malls and condo developments, as towns do in so much of the rest of America. They simply end, and the wild country begins again.

Outside of Austin, I climbed a dirt road to a stone tower called the Stokes Castle. It was built in the late 19th century by Anson Phelps Stokes, a patrician New Yorker who owned some mines in the area. Having once seen a similar tower during a tour of Italy, he decided to build a replica in Nevada, in hopes of turning it into a summer hermitage. But with its lack of adornments, its utter solitude, the tower does not inspire visions of Campagna. It belongs here in Lander County, a monument to nothing but human wealth and will.

Inside, at least, the tower was lavishly outfitted; there was a curtained roof deck, where Phelps may have taken his evening cocktail, entranced by the pure stillness of the hills. Or maybe he was not so entranced, maybe Bar Harbor or Newport beckoned, for the tower was used only in the summers of 1897 and '98. Surrendered to time, wind and thieves, the tower stood dying until 1956, when it was rescued, via purchase, by a concerned Stokes relative.

Today, the Stokes Castle is fenced and outfitted with historical markers, allowed to stand in arrested decay. Hardly anyone ever lived here; nobody will live here again. Overlooking the hills, the tower indeed looks like the vestige of some great medieval fortress. But there are no invading armies coming, for there is nothing here to take. There is only the rare 18-wheeler pushing ever deeper into the Nevada ranges, the lonely tourist screaming down the lonely highway, looking for something but finding only endless road ahead.



George Ourfalian/Reuters

TUNISIA'S ISIS CONNECTION

THIS TINY NATION SENDS MORE FOREIGN JIHADIST FIGHTERS TO SYRIA THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY.

Sitting in a busy Tunis café, sipping an espresso and wearing a neat button-down dress shirt, the brother of Jabeur Khachnaoui, one of two men who killed 21 tourists at the National Bardo Museum in March, is still coming to grips with what happened that day. “It’s so horrible and so ironic, as my brother was dragged into this stuff, and I am writing my doctoral thesis on religious tolerance,” says the Ph.D.

student of philosophy who asked Newsweek not to use his real name and to identify him as Mohammed. “The day he died, I was marching in a rally against terrorism.”

The brothers grew up in the countryside, sons of a prosperous olive farmer. Jabeur, the youngest, often felt isolated because his siblings were so much older, Mohammed recalls. And yet, he was happy and got good grades—the home was full of books and laughter. “We don’t come from a poor family,” says Mohammed. “But he didn’t want our father’s money—each summer he went to the coast and worked on construction sites so that he could be independent. There was not much to do in our village, so my guess is that when the Islamists approached him with a new vision of how to live his life, he was ripe.”

His family noticed a gradual change in Jabeur. He began to spend hours praying. He stopped shaking women’s hands, even relatives’. He sometimes stayed up all night studying the Koran and had memorized nearly half of it. Mohammed, sensing something was wrong, began giving his brother books he hoped would counteract extremist tendencies. “I tried Descartes, Kant, Spinoza,” he says. “I don’t mind that he was religious—not one bit. But I did not want him to be fanatical.”

At one point, Jabeur disappeared for two months. Mohammed says he believes this is when he underwent military training.

Jabeur was only 19 when he and 26-year-old Yassine Labidi armed themselves with assault rifles and entered the lightly guarded museum to hunt down and kill tourists from Italy, France, Spain, Poland, Germany and elsewhere. The attackers were finally gunned down by Tunisia’s elite BAT squad.



On March 22, 2015 two gunmen attacked Tunisia's National Bardo Museum and were shot down by police near a stairwell still littered with bulletholes. Twenty-one people, all but one of them foreign tourists, were killed while visiting the museum in Tunis on March 18. Credit: Nicolas Fauque/Images de Tunisie/Sipa USA

Mohammed begins to cry as he recalls the day of the Bardo attack. “My little brother was like [Adolf] Eichmann,” he says, referring to the Nazi war criminal. “He would say he was just following orders. There is no way he was a mastermind behind any of this.”

Like most Tunisians, Mohammed was watching the news on television when authorities released the names of the killers. “By 7 p.m. someone called me and said, ‘Did you see what your little brother has done?’” He later saw a photograph of the bodies of his brother and Labidi in a pool of blood. “I really don’t understand,” says Mohammed. “I just don’t understand.”

Bullet Holes and Bacchus

Many in Tunisia are trying to understand why so many young men from this relatively advanced and secular country, which emerged from the Arab Spring with a fledgling democracy, are turning to extremism and joining

ISIS. Tunisia sends the largest number of foreign jihadists to fight for ISIS in Syria. The Ministry of Interior estimates the number to be around 3,000, although a precise figure is difficult to determine.

Before the museum attack in March, it was easy for many Tunisians to ignore that discomfiting statistic. Tunisia is a popular vacation resort, only 600 miles from Italy. It has an educated, multilingual population. Even under the dictator Ben Ali, Tunisia had a highly developed education system that produced some of the best computer scientists in the world (the hacktivist group Anonymous relies heavily on Tunisian hackers). Each week, cruise ships from Europe would dock in the port of Tunis and disgorge hundreds of tourists eager to see the priceless antiquities dating from the time when Tunisia was an important player in the Mediterranean world, close to vital shipping routes and strategically significant to the Romans, Arabs, French and Ottoman Turks.

Now visitors walking through the Bardo Museum's cavernous halls can see bullet holes in a cabinet holding a second century statue of the Roman god of wine, Bacchus. Decorative tiles in several rooms where people tried to hide in corners have been blasted away by gunshots and shrapnel. The attack on the Bardo was not just a blow to tourism in Tunisia, one of the biggest sources of revenue for the country; it forced Tunisians to address radicalization in their society.

In another café in Douar Hicher, a suburb of Tunis, Asim (not his real name), a 25-year-old engineering student, sits drinking tea and smoking a cigarette. He has, at last count, nine friends, some of them college graduates, fighting in Syria. He says most of them dismissed reports that ISIS was committing horrific crimes, such as beheading people and kidnapping minorities. "They said it was Western propaganda against Muslims.

“Each of them has a different reason [for going],” Asim says. “Some have been tricked—that is, they are told what an amazing life they will have in Raqqa [the ISIS capital], that there are pretty women to marry, that life will be easier and they will be successful.” He pauses. “Then they get there, and it’s living hell.

“Of all my friends who went, I can’t say any of them were particularly religious before,” Asim says. “Because of the pressure of their lives here—no jobs, no prospects—religion became a refuge, a solace.” He says money can be a factor: “It’s said that some battalions do pay. I have heard up to \$1,000 a month.”

Poverty and unemployment are not as bad in Tunisia as in some other Middle Eastern countries, and there is not the repression that is seen in such neighboring countries as Morocco or Algeria. But for the young, life is not easy.

The official unemployment rate is 15 percent, but Said Ferjani, a senior official of the Ennahda party (a moderate Islamic party that is part of the government’s coalition), says it is probably closer to 20 to 25 percent. The African Development Bank in Tunis puts unemployment among young college graduates at 34 percent. “The revolution was an expression of disillusionment,” Ferjani says. “But so are the boats that are taking migrants away from Tunisia and other countries to Europe. Something is very wrong. Even if it seems all right here on the surface, people have high expectations. They want a better life. So a recruiter comes around and tells them about a better life fighting in Iraq and Syria—and they accept.” An economist by training, Ferjani says that in order to absorb the 80,000 new university graduates each year—Tunisia has one of the highest rates of education in the Middle East—a minimum of 100,000 jobs need to be created. Tunisia needs more investment, economic reforms and a crackdown on its black market. Corruption is also a problem. It was anger over corruption that drove a vegetable seller to set himself on fire in late

2010, triggering what became the Jasmine Revolution. “But to stop corruption, you need to change the mindset,” says Ferjani. “We made a new constitution—that’s beautiful. But we are working with an old set of laws.”

Tunisia is in transition, says Ferjani. “Everything is not rosy. There is disillusionment. When you are disillusioned, you are drawn to radicalism.”

One day in late May, I meet a bearded, tattooed rapper named Da Costa in a park near the Bardo Museum, just as news is emerging of another incident that may or may not be related to terrorism—a Tunisian soldier opened fire on his colleagues, killing seven and wounding many. Again, the capital is in a state of fear.

Da Costa tells me about his brother, Yusuf, who died fighting in Syria in 2012. “He was only 24 years old. By the time he left for Syria, he was so indoctrinated that I couldn’t even talk to him. He was so brainwashed. He just kept going to the mosque, and the recruiters know exactly who is vulnerable, who is seeking a new life, who is in despair.” Da Costa says Yusuf came back to Tunisia shortly after he joined a battalion and told him: “I didn’t find what I was looking for.” The looting and the robbing discouraged him. But back home, “his life in Tunis was hell—the police hassled him constantly.” He went back to Syria and died fighting in Kobane. He left behind a wife—provided to him by ISIS—who was pregnant. Da Costa sips from a glass of mineral water. “I try to tell them, through rapping, not to go,” he says, writing down some of his lyrics: “Brothers, do not follow the jihad. They promise you heaven when heaven is not theirs to give.” He sighs. “But it doesn’t work. There were so many boys from my neighborhood who went to Syria that they actually named a battalion after it.” His Biggest Secret

In Labidi's middle-class home in the Omrane al-Alaa neighborhood of Tunis, his family is still in shock, months after he attacked the Bardo Museum. His mother, father and

younger sister (who ask not to be identified by name) receive me graciously, if tearfully. His mother runs a kindergarten. She brings out dishes of homemade chickpea cookies and glasses of tea. They insist there were no signs Labidi was being indoctrinated.



Police stand guard as thousands of Tunisians gather at Bardo Square in Tunis to march against terrorism on March 29, 2015. At least 24 people, mostly foreign tourists, were killed, and over 47 were injured when gunmen stormed the National Bardo Museum on March 18, 2015. Credit: Nacer Talel/Anadolu Agency/Getty

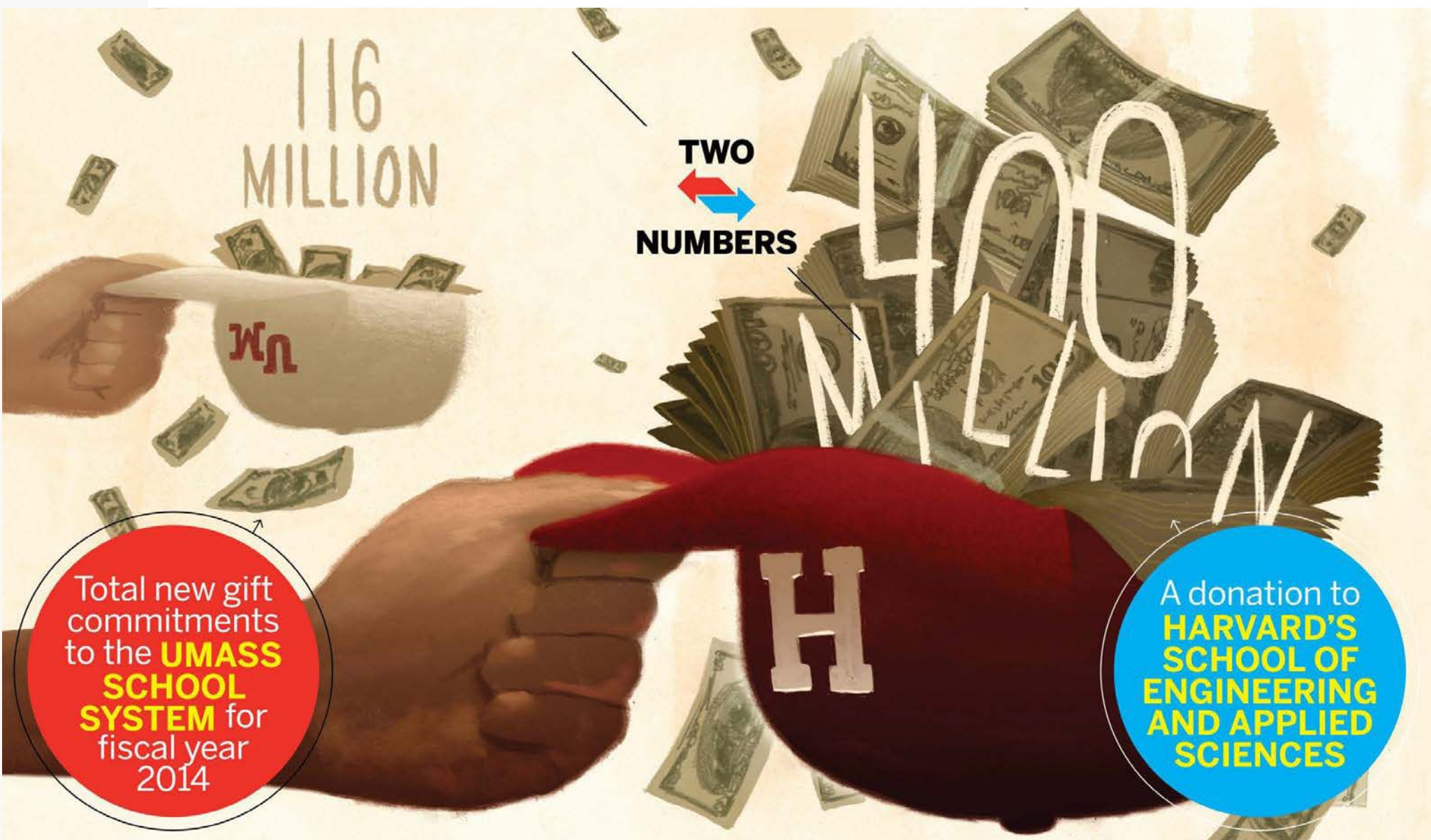
“I knew my brother,” says his sister. She describes him as a young man who liked to swim. He was small, thin, with a slight build and a sensitive manner. Labidi was not praying more than usual or seeking out different friends, she says. He did pray at the nearby mosque, she says, but he was not growing his beard any longer than usual. He was not glued to the Internet watching YouTube videos of ISIS fighters. She says she knew everything about him—except perhaps his biggest secret. He was, in fact, part of a sleeper cell activated after the 2011 Jasmine Revolution. Last December, he told the family he had to go work for a few months near Sfax, Tunisia. It was then, officials

believe, that Labidi trained for five months in a military camp in Libya. On March 18, Labidi went to the mosque and said his morning prayers; he stopped to buy a bottle of milk and some fresh bread for breakfast. “Up until the last minute, when we walked out the door that morning, he acted normally,” his sister says. He ate with his family, chatted with his sister about work, then kissed his mother goodbye. He took a sports bag with him and told her he was going to a Turkish bathhouse. Instead, he went out to slaughter tourists.

“My son was the victim of brainwashing,” his mother says.

Ghazi Mirabet is a lawyer who has represented several so-called normal young men who became jihadists fighting in Syria. “It always starts at a mosque,” he says.

Among Mirabet's former clients is a famous rapper called Emino, now a prominent ISIS member who posts on Facebook. Emino came from a well-educated, middle-class family—his mother is a civil servant in the Tunisian government. He has not contacted his mother or his lawyer since he went to Syria. “First he used to sing about sex and drugs,” says Mirabet. “Then he goes to prison for having weed. In prison, little by little, he became more religious. He stopped rapping. He stopped shaving. He grew his beard. He spent more time at the mosque. Then one day he was indoctrinated.” The entire process to create a jihadist took about six to nine months, says Mirabet. “Terrifying, isn’t it?”



Skip Sterling

HARVARD'S \$400 MILLION GIFT AND THE WIDENING COLLEGE DONATION GAP

A HUGE DONATION TO HARVARD FROM BILLIONAIRE JOHN PAULSON POINTS TO AN INCREASING GAP IN WHICH COLLEGES GET GIFTS.

Even though it's 379 years old, Harvard attracts some of the planet's brightest young minds. Despite being the

world's wealthiest institution of higher education, with a \$36.5 billion endowment, it is still quite a money magnet.

On June 3, the university received the largest gift in its history, from billionaire John Paulson. The Harvard Business School alum, who manages a New York-based hedge fund, gave \$400 million to the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS), which last year had an endowment of about \$990 million, 2.7 percent of the university's total.

Paulson's gift shines a spotlight on a pattern in Massachusetts and throughout the country: a widening gap in financial support between a handful of wealthy institutions and both public universities and other private colleges, says Richard Freeland, the commissioner of higher education for Massachusetts. "What's really unfortunate is the institutions that are serving so many of our people...just aren't being supported at a level which permits them to offer the quality of education that is appropriate for our young people."

Paulson's donation is about 3.45 times the total new gift commitments to the University of Massachusetts (UMass) system for fiscal year 2014.

Harvard's total enrollment of undergraduate, graduate and professional studies students last year was about 21,000 students. Registration in the UMass system was more than three times that—72,796.

UMass has five campuses—in Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth, Lowell and Worcester. Last year, it received \$116 million in private, philanthropic support for all aspects of the system, such as student aid, faculty research and athletics.

Endowed funds are either restricted for specific purposes or unrestricted for individuals or groups to choose where to allocate the annual dividend. Paulson's gift is an unrestricted

fund that in theory will aid teaching, research and other programs at SEAS.

At UMass, not all of that \$116 million was unrestricted—34 percent went to the university’s endowment to assist in building its long-term base of support, says Ann Scales, a spokeswoman for the university's Office of the President.

Massachusetts, home to some of the country’s most prestigious academic institutions, has nine state universities and 15 community colleges in addition to the UMass system. In 1967, 30 percent of undergraduates in Massachusetts were educated at public institutions. By 2013, that percentage rose to more than half, as education costs compete with those of other needs, such as health care.

As a handful of institutions become wealthier, “there is inequality concern that is going on all over the country,” Freeland says. “I deeply lament the fact that higher public education in Massachusetts and elsewhere is struggling to keep its head above water.”



Gabriella Demczuk/The New York Times/Redux

MARTIN O'MALLEY NEEDS BLACK VOTES TO WIN IN 2016

PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL MARTIN O'MALLEY MADE HIS NAME WINNING BLACK VOTES IN BALTIMORE, BUT THE RECENT RIOTS MIGHT HAVE GUTTED HIS SUPPORT.

The headline on the front page of The Washington Post's September 15, 1999, late edition was startlingly politically incorrect: "White Man Gets Mayoral Nomination in Baltimore." Martin O'Malley had defeated two African-American candidates, and thanks to Baltimore's heavily

Democratic makeup (roughly 90 percent of registered voters), he went on to become the rare white mayor of a majority-black city.

The headline provoked an outcry, and the Post quickly rewrote it, **apologizing for** having “distorted the role of race in the election.” Perhaps it did, but that headline continues to define O’Malley’s career as a politician who knows how to get black votes. After all, he attracted nearly a third of Baltimore’s black voters that year and a sizable majority of them four years later. After his two terms as mayor, O’Malley served two terms as governor of Maryland, beginning in 2007 and ending in January of this year. That state is a good proving ground for a candidate’s ability to garner black support, since it is over 30 percent black, one of the highest concentrations of African-Americans in the country.

With O’Malley now running for president, his success in attracting significant black support might seem a threat to Hillary Clinton, the Democratic Party’s presidential front-runner. The former first lady’s struggle thus far to generate much enthusiasm for her candidacy could provide an opening for a dark horse—in which case O’Malley, a former governor running to her left, would be arguably more likely to unify the party than Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. Clinton saw what happened in 2008 when she lost the majority of the black vote to Barack Obama, and while the Irish-American, guitar-strumming former mayor’s presidential bid is never going to inspire black voters in the same way as that of the first African-American president, she has to worry that O’Malley might cut into her support there. Clinton was the front-runner eight years ago and knows a stumble is possible.

But peer behind O’Malley’s election numbers and there are hints his magic touch with black voters is gone. That’s partly because O’Malley was never truly beloved by Maryland’s African-American community, where he

benefited from a lack of strong black opponents. And while he successfully fought for policies important to the black community, those victories have been overshadowed by his controversial approach to law enforcement in Baltimore, which lowered crime but ratcheted up tensions between black residents and the police. The rioting this spring that followed the death of a black man at the hands of Baltimore police put O'Malley on the defensive, as police brutality is now the civil rights cause of the moment. And that's not a discussion O'Malley appears eager to be drawn into. In the early days of his presidential campaign, he has all but ducked the issue of race and treated his city's rioting as a symptom of some national malaise, not part of his legacy.

Complaints of Brutality

O'Malley's traction with minority voters was often less than it seemed. In that first mayoral bid in 1999, O'Malley, then a city councilman, benefited from the implosion of his two main rivals, particularly the front-runner, City Council President Lawrence Bell, whose supporters made headlines with racially charged attacks on O'Malley. (Bell called on blacks to "vote for someone who looked like them.") With Bell and Councilman Carl Stokes courting the same base, O'Malley was able to win by pulling almost all of the white vote and roughly 30 percent of blacks.

O'Malley made tough crime-fighting policies the centerpiece of his campaign then—a savvy move, since that was the **top issue for Baltimore voters**, black or white. Running for re-election on the same tough-on-crime platform in 2003, O'Malley won the Democratic primary in 89 of the 125 precincts where African-Americans were 90 percent of the population or more, according to the **The Baltimore Sun**. Then, as now, O'Malley claimed the victory was an endorsement for his zero-tolerance policing.

Critics, however, say O'Malley's re-election as mayor overstates his support among African-Americans. "I wouldn't see it as an endorsement," says Stokes, who lost to

O'Malley in 1999. "He didn't have much of a challenge in his second run." Stokes believes the benefits of incumbency and O'Malley's war chest kept him from drawing any real opposition. But longtime Maryland pollster Patrick Gonzales says O'Malley's lack of a credible opponent in his re-election for mayor suggests he was "well-enough liked by the black community" to scare off serious challengers. **An April 2003 poll** by Gonzales's firm put his approval rating at 69 percent. But Gonzales's poll also showed he would have lost black voters by a wide margin against popular former U.S. Representative Kweisi Mfume, who was then president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

O'Malley's police policies, once welcomed by blacks and whites alike, came under increased fire during his second term, as complaints of police harassment rose, all part and parcel of an approach aimed at cracking down on crimes, however innocuous. The American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland filed a **lawsuit against the Baltimore Police Department** in June 2006, O'Malley's final year as mayor, alleging police were illegally arresting people in Baltimore's poor, predominantly black neighborhoods for things like loitering or public urination. The city **settled the suit** in 2010.

In 2006, even Republicans sensed O'Malley was vulnerable on the issue. GOP incumbent Bob Ehrlich went after him in the 2006 governor's race, lambasting the "mass arrests of innocent people" in Baltimore during one **debate**.

O'Malley didn't run away from his crime record in 2006, but he also talked up other policies that appealed to voters across the racial spectrum, such as improving public education. Black voters in Maryland also appreciated that O'Malley was "someone who was very accessible" to their community, says Mfume. That "didn't mean necessarily that they would always see eye to eye, but they were being heard," he adds. O'Malley won the governor's seat by just 1

percent in 2006, and black turnout numbers suggest he didn't ride a black wave into the governorship. In a rematch with Ehrlich in 2010, O'Malley won by 14 percent statewide, and while he increased his support among all segments of the electorate, he made no significant gains with African-Americans.

Scourge of Hopelessness

It's hard to say how O'Malley, who launched his presidential campaign May 30, will do with black voters in 2016, since he's still nearly invisible outside Maryland, barely registering in Democratic surveys. In South Carolina, an early voting state with a large African-American population, [a poll](#) from the Democratic-leaning firm Public Policy Polling earlier this year pegged his support at just 3 percent, and he earned the backing of only 4 percent of black Democrats (versus 60 percent for Clinton).

And in these early days of the campaign, it's been Clinton who's making a direct appeal to the black community, primarily on criminal justice and voting rights. O'Malley has acknowledged the need for some criminal justice reforms, like requiring police to wear body cameras, but in his campaign launch speech last month, he denied that the riots in Baltimore were primarily about race. The "scourge of hopelessness that happened to ignite here that evening transcends race or geography," O'Malley insisted. Baltimore's woes, he seemed to imply, were the product of national currents, rather than a reflection of his eight years as mayor.

And therein lies the rub for O'Malley. Police brutality—the issue that has ignited a new generation of civil rights activists—is where his record will be most problematic for black voters. Critics now blame O'Malley's zero-tolerance policies for heightening tensions that led to Freddie Gray's death in police custody this spring, sparking days of protest. Even when O'Malley was mayor, it complicated his ties with the black community, creating what The Baltimore

Sun **described as** a “sometimes-rocky relationship.” Now that racist policing is in the spotlight, O’Malley’s critics can hammer him in the pages of The Washington Post and nightly on MSNBC.

His defense was and continues to be that the policies were necessary to lower Baltimore’s staggering crime rate, something black voters at the time said was a top priority. But the steep drop in crime in the U.S., to **its lowest level in decades**, has made that crime-fighting record far less salient and those tactics less defensible for today’s black voters.

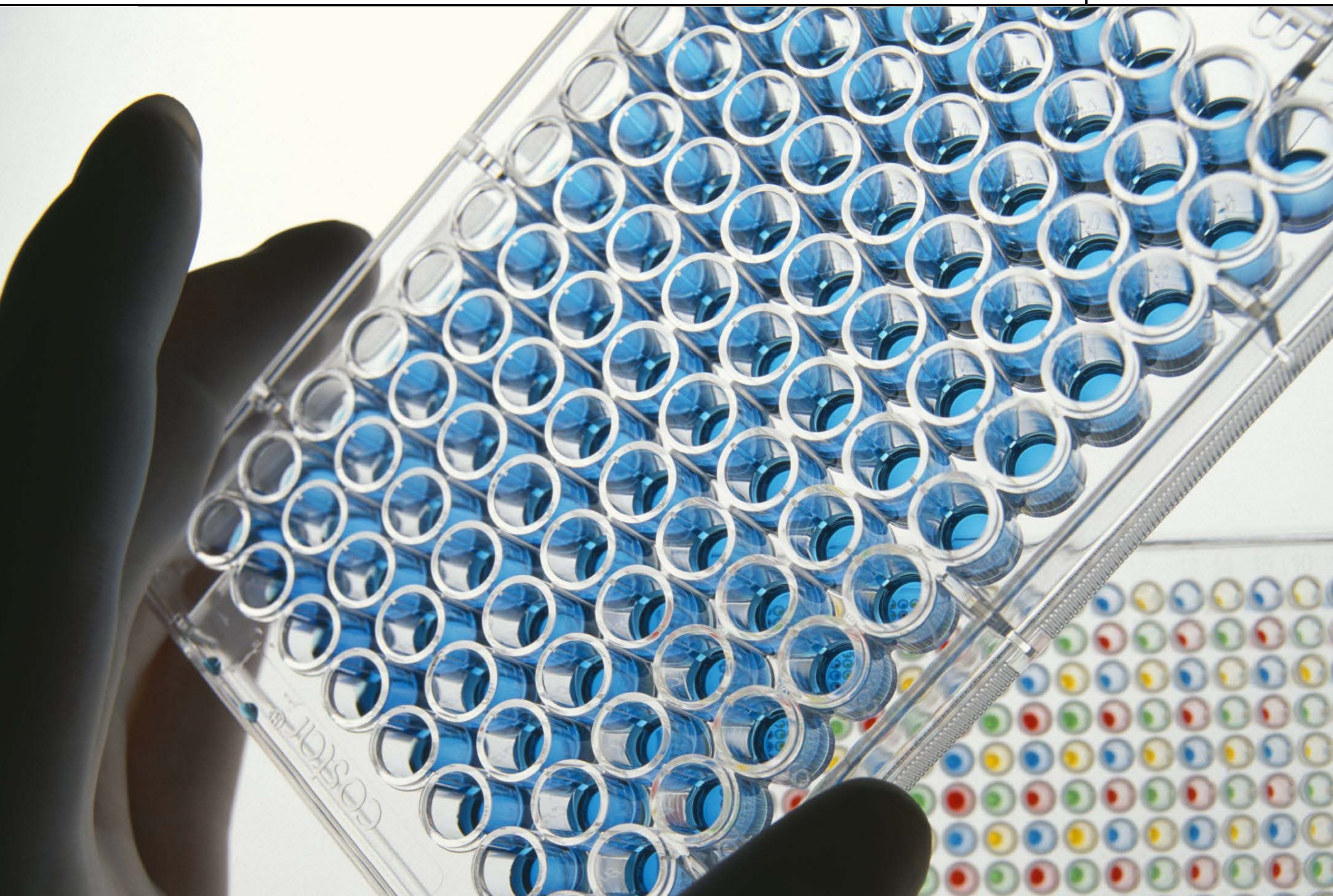
O’Malley backers point to other justice issues where he lined up with the black community, such as restoring voting rights for convicted felons and his effort as governor to abolish Maryland’s death penalty, which Benjamin Jealous, the former president of the NAACP, calls “the institutional extension of lynching.” Jealous says it was brave of O’Malley to take the stand: “Courage in defense of civil rights and human rights has resonance in the black community. Always has, always will.”

The O’Malley campaign plans to unveil an urban agenda in the coming months that, judging by his emphasis thus far, will focus heavily on the economy and inequality. But given the near-constant video streams documenting police brutality from across the nation, black voters are going to expect him to address his role not only in lowering crime but also in promoting a type of policing now intertwined with the spate of black male deaths.

O’Malley’s critics aren’t keeping quiet. “I think the Baltimore citizens are going to be loud about their comments about his years in Baltimore,” says Stokes. “It’s going to just get louder if he was to advance beyond his 1 or 2 percent.”

That said, O’Malley has his backers. Even one of his most strenuous critics, The Wire creator David Simon, says if the former Maryland governor were to win the Democratic nomination for president, **he'd have Simon's vote**, thanks to other liberal policies like abolishing the death penalty and

legalizing gay marriage. And given the fidelity of African-Americans to the Democratic Party, O'Malley would no doubt win the majority of their votes versus a Republican opponent.



Science Source

VIRSCAN CAN IDENTIFY YOUR PAST VIRUSES FROM A DROP OF BLOOD

THE TOOL IS EXPECTED TO HELP DOCTORS FIND HARD-TO-DETECT INFECTIONS IN TIME TO STOP THEM IN THEIR TRACKS.

Our bodies are like huge Motel 6s, hosting hundreds of thousands of microorganisms. Many are bacteria, making up the “human microbiota” that resides all over the body, from

the deep layers of skin to the gastrointestinal tract. Then there are the viruses. Sometimes they make you ill; other times the body's immune system knocks them out and they disappear before you or your doctor know it. Some viruses lurk in hidden corners, unrecognizable until they attack.

Both the destroyed and the latent viruses leave permanent marks in the body: Whenever you get infected with a virus, the immune system produces antibodies to attack the virus. They remain in your blood—often for months, years and some even for your entire life.

Recently, a research team including scientists from Harvard, MIT and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute designed a method to find every last one of these antibodies. It's called **VirScan**, and it can identify your entire viral history with just one drop of blood.

The researchers first took harmless viruses and engineered them to carry bits of (also innocuous) proteins from human viruses on their surfaces. Using a huge data set, including proteins of over 1,000 strains of the 206 known human viruses, they mixed a test patient's drop of blood into the engineered viruses. The antibodies in the blood, poised to attack the invader, immediately detected and became attracted to the protein fragments, thus revealing all the viruses to which the patient had been exposed.

To test out the new tool, the team screened 569 patients from all over the world. They found that on average, people had been exposed to about 10 viral species. Several people, however, had been exposed to over 84 viral species. The results of the project were published June 5 in the journal **Science**.

It's neat to be able to see your viral history laid out on paper, but researchers say the new screening test could also lead to earlier detection of viruses that can cause irreparable damage and often are covert for many years—like hepatitis C and HIV. VirScan should make viral testing cheap and efficient: Instead of having to test specifically for one virus,

doctors could do an entire slew of tests at once, for about \$25.

“Ideally this will be a standard thing where you go to the doctor once a year for a checkup,” says Stephen Elledge, lead author of the study and a professor of genetics at Harvard Medical School. “There are literally millions of people walking around with unnoticed hepatitis C or HIV infections. Unless the doctor suspects you have HIV, they won’t even do a test for it.”

He adds that a test like VirScan would also churn up new information about some of the most mysterious and debilitating diseases we face today. “A lot of people think that certain diseases like [multiple sclerosis] or Type 2 diabetes, or maybe even chronic fatigue syndrome, may have a viral origin,” Elledge says. Understanding the broader viral backdrop in human populations could help doctors finally confirm those connections and, eventually, tailor more effective treatments.



Mads Perch/Getty

THE DIGITAL YOU IS ALREADY LIVING IN THE CLOUD, APPLYING FOR CREDIT CARDS

**YOUR ONLINE AVATAR IS HERE, AND SORRY, IT DOESN'T
LOOK LIKE LUKE SKYWALKER.**

Just a decade ago, we thought we might all wind up with an online alter ego—an avatar—that we each created and controlled, maybe molding it into the person we wish we were, like with muscles or charm or a T. rex head. It was the

idea behind the virtual world **Second Life**, not to mention too much science fiction.

But that's not the way it's turning out. We're each creating a digital doppelgänger, all right, whether we want to or not. This creature is not who we wish to be—it's a raw, unfiltered, brutally revealing version of ourselves, built on our dossiers of clicks, keystrokes, swipes, likes, transactions and check-ins, absent whatever inner belief system drove them. If a soul is who you are no matter what everybody else sees, this digital you is the opposite of a soul: It is all action and no intention. No amount of church can save it—or retroactively alter it.

Apple CEO Tim Cook got a lot of ink recently by saying he is worried about your online privacy. And **polls** show the public is becoming more concerned about this issue, even though—as with global warming or an addiction to french fries—we tend to just keep doing what we've been doing and hope for the best.

But the issue is way more profound than anything Cook crabbed about. You are creating a version of yourself that will affect your future job interviews, loan applications and dates. For a wee glimpse of what's coming, try out a site called **Digital Shadow**. The first words you see will be: "You are not an individual. You are a data cluster." It gets weirder from there, guessing your salary or pointing out friends who might betray you, based only on your data trail.

Your digital self will gradually get fleshed out—even emotionally. Consider the potential of the new version of **Google Photo**. You give it your digital photos, and the software scans them for faces and situations, comparing the images with what it has learned from the billions of other photos in its system. It can recognize and tag people, places and things, so you can find that photo of you and your siblings by the statue of David. Google says it soon will also be able to recognize emotions, like whether you're happy or angry in a photo. By analyzing the emotions in a big enough

collection of images, Google could start understanding your relationships to friends, family, colleagues—a way to “know” you that goes far beyond tracking search history.

Facebook might already know you better than your spouse does. One academic **study**, published last year by the National Academy of Sciences, showed that a computer model built using someone’s Facebook likes can judge the person’s personality traits more accurately than can friends or even family members. In fact, the analysis can even do a good job “predicting life outcomes such as substance use, political attitudes and physical health,” the researchers reported. Imagine how that might play out if mixed with a dating site or **job interview**.

The range of actions being turned into data is staggering. Online retailers like Amazon know what you buy. Netflix knows your taste in

movies; Spotify has your music preferences. Uber knows where you go and when. Tinder knows what you’re looking for in a one-night stand. LinkedIn knows what you’re good at. Seamless knows what you eat. News sites see what you read. Google knows what you write in Gmail and their calendar charts how you spend your time. And now Google’s Nest can tell who is in your house at what times of the day. If **Google manages** to make Google Glass popular, the company could collect data on everything you see.

All of it could feed into a more robust, authentic digital you. And new kinds of companies are popping up to interact with that version of you. In finance, **Lenddo** spent about three years proving that it could analyze the Facebook data of loan applicants to understand who would pay back the loans—a more accurate credit rating than a credit rating. It has used its system to lend money to thousands of people in developing countries who never had a bank account. Now it’s selling the technology to financial institutions.

One of the hottest areas of venture capital investment right now is **insurance tech**. Insurance is likely to shift in

the next decade to analyzing the digital you, the “you” who can’t fudge anything. The insurance you buy for your home, car, health or life will be completely dependent on the behavior of your digital you.

As more industries find that your digital self accurately predicts how you’ll perform in real life, digital you will become your representative—a required pit stop on the way to a first date, a visa to get into another country, admittance to a college or approval to buy a house by the neighborhood board. The avatar you are creating today will determine your future.

No single entity can put all your data together in one place, although Facebook and Google already knows enough about frequent users to nearly replicate them. But just as you now have to let a mortgage broker look at your finances to buy a house, a prospective employer or insurer will require you to let them see your data. They will make you introduce them to your digital self.

This development is not de facto bad. For some, it might be great. If your digital self predicts that you will be a safe driver, you’ll pay less in car insurance. In a way, this is taking us back to an era of small towns, when the people and businesses you interacted with knew your family, your history, your true nature. In the movie *It’s a Wonderful Life*, Jimmy Stewart lends locals money because he knows them. As Lenddo is now showing, that’s the future of banking, not just its nostalgic past.

Yet like any technology, the creation and release of our digital doppelgängers could be trouble, used to influence or control us in ways we currently can’t comprehend. That seems to be what Cook was getting at in his fiery *speech* this month at the Electronic Privacy Information Center’s Champions of Freedom event. “You might like these so-called free services, but we don’t think they’re worth having your email, your search history and now even your family photos data-mined and sold off for God knows

what advertising purpose,” he said. “And we think someday customers will see this for what it is.”

That someday is now. Your other you has already been born.



Carin Krasner/Getty

THE BIG PROBLEM WITH CHILDREN'S VITAMINS AND SUPPLEMENTS

**A POORLY REGULATED MARKET MEANS THE LABELS
OFTEN DON'T MATCH WHAT'S INSIDE.**

Updated | The kids' vitamins aisle at your grocer or health food store is the kind of nook only a madcap like Willy Wonka could have dreamed up. It's brimming with bottled Technicolor promises in the form of vitamins,

probiotics, fish oils and herbals. Clear containers encase winsome teddy bears (Yummi Bears) and sugar-sprayed sea creatures (Dolphin Pals). Remember Flintstones vitamins? Today, there are 11 varieties. This generation of children barely knows who Fred and Wilma are, but the crunchy shell and fruity, chewy center of Dino Eggs have a high cute quotient, making them irresistible to a certain age group. Then there are the dietary supplements aimed at teens (often with attractive, athletic girls and boys on the packaging) and even the preteen set.

Dietary supplements—a broad term that includes vitamins, minerals, herbs, botanicals, probiotics and amino acids—are big business. The \$26 billion industry has grown by 27 percent in the last five years. Pediatric supplements are a \$573 million chunk of that, according to Euromonitor, a market research firm. The most popular supplement is the vitamin category. Researchers at U.C. Davis Children's Hospital have estimated that one-third of U.S. children take some sort of daily vitamin.

Most of the brands tout myriad health benefits. Vitamin Code Kids is made with lots of organic ingredients, including Brussels sprouts, kale, cucumber, garlic and blueberries. It also has probiotics, and its makers market it as the “chewable whole food multivitamin.” With a smorgasbord like that, why bother making dinner? A big seller these days is vitamin D; a recent **report** concluded that vitamin D deficiencies may cause hypocalcemic seizures, growth disturbances and rickets and perhaps influence cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer.

The problem, though, is that what's on the label probably doesn't match what's in that pill or gummy bear. In 2013, **Kaiser Permanente studied** 55 bottles of over-the-counter vitamin D supplements. While these were adult supplements, the findings shed light on the murkiness of product labels. The amount of vitamin D in the tablets varied from 9 to 146

percent of what was listed on the bottle. That also varied widely from pill to pill in the same bottle.

This can have real repercussions, as in a case published in **Pediatrics** where seven children under 4 years of age overdosed on vitamin D because of a manufacturing error. These kids were taking fish oil pills with 4,000 times the labeled concentration of vitamin D and began experiencing symptoms like nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite and fever. They recovered, but manufacturing errors can be fatal. Last October, an 8-day-old premature infant died in Connecticut's Yale-New Haven Hospital after doctors gave him a probiotic course of ABC Dophilus Powder. The probiotic, manufactured by Solgar in New Jersey, was recalled by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) a month after the death. A U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) investigation showed that the batch from which the child's probiotics originated—along with other batches—was contaminated with a potentially fatal fungus that emerges from rotten vegetables. The boy's family filed a wrongful death suit in April against the company and the hospital. The case is pending; according to Solgar, the contaminant did not enter the probiotics at any point during their production process. "After a thorough investigation in collaboration with the CDC and FDA we did not find the contaminant at any point along our supply chain—from the raw materials, to the manufacturing and packaging, to its transportation and delivery to the hospital pharmacy where it was dispensed," says Andrea Staub, vice president of communications for Solgar. Yale-New Haven declined to comment.

It's no surprise that some health advocates want supplements regulated like prescription drugs. Dietary supplement manufacturers and distributors are not required to obtain approval from the FDA before marketing their products, but they must register with the agency, make sure their products are safe, steer clear of misleading claims and

follow “current good manufacturing practices” (cGMPs). The burden of vouching for the quality of the raw materials is on the manufacturer. That concerns Dr. Frank Greer, a neonatologist and professor emeritus of pediatrics at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. “Most of the vitamin C in the world comes from China,” he says. “And they have not always had a good reputation when it comes to quality control.” In recent years, Chinese companies have made headlines for **manufacturing fake drugs, lead-laced ginger candies** sold in California grocery stores and **contaminated pet treats** that killed over 1,000 U.S. dogs.

Daniel Fabricant, CEO of the Natural Products Association (NPA) and the former FDA dietary supplements director, dismisses these fears. “Just because all the vitamin C is coming from abroad does not mean that it is low quality. There are real rules that manufacturers have to follow, and part of those rules is confirming the identity, potency and strength. When I was at the FDA, I shut down a number of firms and took millions of dollars’ worth of products off the shelves.”

But as the Kaiser Permanente and other studies have shown, standards are not always met. “Trade associations will tell you supplements are a regulated industry, but because it is self-regulated, it’s essentially unregulated,” says Sarah Erush, clinical manager of the pharmacy department at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. “It is like letting the fox guard the henhouse.” That’s why she took the unusual step of prohibiting parents from bringing in supplements while their children undergo treatment at the facility. Erush and her team have instead approved a spartan list of 30 brands—including vitamins, minerals, amino acids and herbals—that they feel comfortable administering.

The first thing Erush looks for in a product is whether it carries the **U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention** seal of approval. The USP is an independent nonprofit that sets

public standards for quality in food, drugs and dietary supplements. The USP will—for a fee—independently audit the purity, potency, stability and disintegration of supplements, ensuring that products contain the ingredients listed and adhere to FDA guidelines. The organization will not say whether a product is effective.

While its seal is considered the gold standard, USP isn't the only independent supplements auditor rushing in to fill the gap in our regulatory system. **NSF International** is another nonprofit with a similar seal of approval, and **ConsumerLab.com** tests supplements purchased from store shelves and accesses the results for a fee. The NPA also has a voluntary third-party audit program run by Underwriters Laboratories that confirms if a manufacturer is following cGMPs.

Many adult supplements carry the USP seal, but only one children's vitamin, Kirkland Children's Chewable Tablets, does. I spoke with John Atwater, senior director of the USP verification programs, to make sure I wasn't missing anything, and he says established pharmaceutical companies like Bayer (Flintstones vitamins) and Pfizer (Centrum Kids) feel they have enough brand recognition and strong internal protocols to forgo an external audit. I contacted Bayer and Pfizer, and they confirmed Atwater's statement. "While USP certification is useful for newer and less well-known manufacturers to reassure consumers about quality, the Flintstones brand and Bayer names provide the same assurance to our consumers," says Tricia McKernan, Bayer's consumer care vice president of global communications. Both manufacturers also say their products are tested during production, prior to release and even while on store shelves.

According to the CDC, 93 percent of kids don't eat enough vegetables. But these days, our kitchen staples are already highly supplemented: Milk and cereal have added vitamins and minerals; some tortilla chips, breads and eggs are omega-fortified; and each yogurt brand seems to tout

its own exotic-sounding probiotic clan. And many health experts say vitamins aren't really necessary. "If your child is following a basic and balanced diet, there is no need," says Dr. Kadakkal Radhakrishnan, a pediatric gastroenterologist and hepatologist at the Cleveland Clinic. (Those with special dietary needs—vegetarians, for example—do benefit from vitamins, he adds.)

There's also the possibility that the stuff in the supplements—even the ingredients that are meant to be there—are not good for children. My kids pine for Trader Joe's Gummy Vites. After studying the label, I found no USP seal and, for example, only 80 international units of vitamin D (20 percent of the recommended daily dosage). Other ingredients include glucose syrup, sucrose and gelatin. Lots of popular brands have these and other filler ingredients, such as corn syrup, sorbitol, hydrogenated coconut oil, soy, shellac, artificial flavors and artificial colors. They are all deemed safe by the FDA, but not everyone agrees that they are harmless.

"You should definitely scan the label for additives and sweeteners," says Radhakrishnan. "Sorbitol in excess is a laxative, and there is conflicting evidence on whether or not some artificial colors have been linked to ADHD." Numerous studies have linked artificial colorants with aggravating symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children. In the European Union, foods with artificial food dyes must carry a warning label stating that they "may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children." In the U.K., artificial colors have been banned. In 2011, the FDA's food advisory committee debated similar action, but concluded that the current data did not support a causal link between certified color additives and ADHD.

As for vitamin D, today's medical darling? Let's not forget that in the '80s and '90s vitamin E was the prevailing panacea. Many doctors believed that it could curb cardiovascular disease and other illnesses. But further

research, including a 2005 report in [JAMA](#), found that long-term vitamin E supplementation might “increase the risk for heart failure.”

For most kids, a magic gummy is sweeter to chew on than a forkful of frisée, and the aggressive marketing of kids’ colorful vitamins makes them hard to resist. The latest American Association of Poison Control Centers annual report documents over 32,000 concerned calls relating to pediatric vitamin exposure in children 12 and younger. In over 1,500 cases, children were treated at a health care facility for minor to moderate symptoms.

What’s a parent to do? Talk to your pediatrician and embrace a mantra of moderation. If it makes you feel better, give them that Dino Egg. Just keep the bottle on the top shelf, and don’t believe everything you read on the label.

This story has been updated to include a statement from Solgar, the manufacturer of ABC Dophilus Powder.



Aleksandr Gorbachev

MEET BORIS GREBENSHCHIKOV, THE SOVIET BOB DYLAN

**A Q&A WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT MUSICIAN YOU'VE
NEVER HEARD OF - BUT RUSSIANS HAVE.**

On Tuesday, May 19, hundreds of people lined up in front of the Webster Hall concert venue in Manhattan's East Village, and most of them were speaking Russian. Expats, first generation immigrants and tourists, they all came to catch Boris Grebenshchikov (who more

spells his last name as Grebenshikov in English) on a rare American tour. He's the man who essentially invented rock music in Russia, and has been one of the most respected and influential singer-songwriters in the country for several decades. Grebenshchikov, 61, who started making music in the early 1970's with his band Aquarium, is often described as the Russian counterpart to Bob Dylan. Though this label greatly oversimplifies both musicians' legacies, certain aspects of the comparison make sense. A fan both of British and American rock (from Dylan to Marc Bolan, Lou Reed to Talking Heads) and the Russian literary tradition, Grebenshchikov – usually referred to as BG – synthesized contemporary Western culture with his native Russian one, interpreting the foreign sounds in his own way and creating a unique sub-genre with his brand of highly sophisticated and metaphoric lyricism. Essentially, since the mid-1980's BG has assumed the role of the Russian Poet, an artist who put the nation's spirit into song. Many of his lines have become their own kinds of proverbs in Russian, and hardly anyone who tries to write a song with a guitar there can escape his influence. At some point, BG tried to make it in America. When the Perestroika came, and the West became curious about the Soviet counter-culture, Grebenshchikov went to the U.S. to work with producer Dave Stewart, of Eurythmics, recording an English-language album, *Radio Silence*. The record managed to enter the *Billboard* Top 200, and BG even appeared on *Letterman*, but the breakthrough didn't quite land, and Grebenshchikov went back home to continue his Russian career.

It's a widely held belief that the Soviet underground rock scene, led by BG and Aquarium, played an important role in helping to bring the Soviet regime to an end. But apart from his Perestroika anthem "Train On Fire," Grebenshchikov has rarely expressed his personal political views or affiliations, either publicly or in his songs.

However, just several months ago, he made an exception. The singer's most recent album, *Salt*, without specifically naming names, offers a grim perspective on contemporary Russia and the country's social climate. The catchiest song, for example, is called "Love in Wartime," and alludes to the conflict in Ukraine; one of the others, "The Governor," is considered to be about the governor of the Yekaterinburg region, who unfairly persecuted a local journalist.

The morning after his New York show, which lasted over two hours and included songs written as early as 1978 and as recent as this year, Grebenshchikov talked to *Newsweek* about his career, his long-lasting relationship with American culture and his views on current Russian events.

Western media usually refer to you as the "Russian Bob Dylan". What do you think of this?

Well, I was called all kinds of things—Russian Bob Dylan, Russian David Bowie, The Russian Clash—you name it...Of course, it's misleading. The thing that me and Dylan have in common is that we both are building bridges. Dylan built the bridge between the American traditional culture and pop culture, between folk and rock-n-roll. I have been trying to bridge between Western culture and Russia. As for everything else, well, I don't really care. Branding is a very shallow thing; it doesn't give people any idea of what the music really is. It's probably a bigger responsibility for Bob Dylan than for me.[Laughs.]

Still, you said several times that when you started writing songs, one of your purposes was to kind of translate Dylan's songs to Russian.

That's not entirely accurate. You can't translate American culture to Russian, because the conditions are very different. When I started writing songs for real, in the late 1970s, there was this one thing that was bothering me. When I listened to Dylan, or the Beatles, or the Rolling Stones, I felt like they knew how I felt and could express it. When I listened to music that was popular in Russia at the time, I couldn't find anything to identify with. I was going around, asking people, "What's wrong? Maybe I'm missing something." And they would tell me, "You

aren't, but rock-n-roll can't be written in Russian, because the language just isn't suited for it." I thought, well, that's bullshit; let's see what can be done. So I started writing my own songs. And the results were quite good from the very beginning.

Ten years later, when you were already one of the biggest rock stars in the Soviet Union, you came to the U.S. and tried to make a music career here. By that time you had probably built a very detailed image of America in your head, drawing from your favorite records, books and movies. Do you remember what your impression was when you finally saw the real thing?

I remember it very well. New York was the first place I'd seen outside Russia. I was brought right to the center of the world. And I felt like Alice in Wonderland. I thought that all the miracles around me were here to teach me something. And there were so many pleasant surprises. For example, trees with little light bulbs on them – we didn't have that in Russia. Or, say, before coming to the U.S., I'd never thought of eating as something interesting. In Russia, food was something to be taken in without thinking about it. The idea that there was Japanese cuisine, or French, or Italian, was rather new to me—and I liked it, of course. I felt like I finally got to experience the real world.

So did you perceive this whole American experience as a career opportunity, or was it just an experiment?

I came here to take part in an adventure. Ken Schaffer, a great mad New York music inventor, had this crazy idea of putting a Russian musician into the American cultural context. He found me, I fulfilled his expectations, and he brought

me here. I hooked up with CBS Records, and then I found Dave Stewart, of Eurythmics. We did an album and a tour together, and then I went back home. You see, I wanted to

see how things were done here. By that point I knew about it only from music magazines. I wanted to experience it first-

hand, so that I could get back and do it the real way. And that's what happened.

And then you went back and recorded the most Russian record you've ever made, The Russian Album. Although it seems it would be more logical if you did something more Americanized...

Logical, yes. But thank God, music doesn't follow logic. You know, before I came here I had been in a cage. It was a nice cage, I can't complain; being in Russia in the 1970's and 1980's was great. But, of course, I wanted to breathe the air of the free world. Everything I recorded up to Radio Silence was basically a bridge between Russia and the West. When I got to the West, I felt the need to build a bridge back.

A lot of people are arguing right now that contemporary Russia is also a cage, comparing it to the Soviet times. What's your take on that?

I have to disappoint you. If you don't watch TV and spend your life on Facebook, if you go out on the streets of St. Petersburg and Moscow, there's a great feeling. It is changing, but for now it's still great. And from my perspective, it is still a free country. Of course, there is a lot of controversy. Just recently there was this Victory Day parade in St. Petersburg that seemed really impressive, but strange. The people weren't commemorating the fallen Russian soldiers; they were celebrating something completely different, some weird idea that was sold to them by the media. This is rather unfortunate, because I think this day deserves much more, but for now somebody is just using it for their own sake. On the other hand, when I walk around Moscow and St. Petersburg, I see a lot of bright young people who do their own little things and enjoy life. When I go to Kiev, I feel great; none of the bullshit you read about in the news, no hostility, and people are even more loving and tender than two years ago. Like somebody said, war is over if

you switch off the TV. One could say that all these bright young people exist in a designated ghetto surrounded by social hatred, war and lies. You can ignore TV and radio, but the majority of the Russian population doesn't. True. But you see, it's always been like this. In the beginning of the 1990's, we were hypnotized. We thought: well, the great wall fell down, and now everybody is going to be happy and free, and everybody will listen to great music. In a few years, it turned out that people actually wanted prison songs. And now they have all this nostalgia about Soviet Russia and Soviet culture. And I'm like, hello? Do you really remember what it was? No, they don't, but they like it. It's not supposed to make them think, and it makes them feel better. All right. If you choose this, I don't have any problem with it. I don't have the right to judge. But there have always been, say, ten, fifteen, or maybe eight percent of the population, who need what we're doing, who have this demand for the real culture. Still, the situation in the country is getting tougher for them.

Some years ago, they at least could do their own thing and not be bothered. Now they're constantly being persecuted.

True again. But again, it has always been like this. Read the great Russian writers of the 19th century, that's how it was back then. And there's nothing wrong with it. Russians have always been fighters, even before they were baptized. There's a wonderful report of this Jewish merchant Ali ibn Yusuf who was employed by Arabs as a spy in, like, [the] 6th century, and they sent them to the territory that later became known as Russia. He wrote that people there are very good fighters, but they will never be a threat to anybody else, because instead of organizing themselves and going to conquer someone else they'd rather be fighting each other. And that's precisely what's going on right now.

You seem to have found your way to deal with the situation. But your last album, that was released only seven months ago, still sounds pretty dark and desperate. So dark, in fact, that your band doesn't even play most of the songs live.

I just couldn't resist the urge to do this album. It was in the air. For some time, I became obsessed with what was going on. I was full of anger and despair, and that's how these songs were born. It has quickly become one of the most popular albums we've ever done. It touched the nerve. I did the right thing, but it was painful. We played this album live for three months, and then said bye-bye to it. We paid our dues to today, let's go back to tomorrow. Because what I'm trying to do now is to build another bridge, between today and the day after tomorrow. Tomorrow is very uncertain; I don't have high hopes for it. But the day after tomorrow is going to be all right.

Do you think that music can still be instrumental in terms of changing society?

I mean, as instrumental as Soviet rock was in bringing down the Soviet Union in the late 1980's? I believe that, today, music is even more important. Good music is preserving the sanity of people. You know, the ten percent I mentioned, and maybe the children of the ninety percent that at the moment are quite aggressive and in the dark, their children are going to be different. At least, I hope so.

So you're not discouraged? It seems that you don't buy the argument that the whole cultural project that Russian liberal-minded intellectuals have been trying to create since the late-1980's failed.

No. There was no project, and, you know, Lao-Tzu cannot be defeated. What we have been doing from the beginning is just a natural extension of what poets of the Silver Age did. There's no real difference between Turgenev and us. We both belong to the Russian culture that is not affected by the bullshit.



MasterClass

YOU TOO CAN WRITE A BEST-SELLER

**MASTERCLASS, A NEW WEB SERVICE, LETS YOU LEARN
FROM THE TOP MINDS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS.**

Before James Patterson became the Guinness World Record holder as the author with the most No. 1 New York Times best-sellers (67!), he was a struggling writer with a thick folder of rejection letters. Thirty-one publishers passed on his first novel, *The Thomas Berryman Number*, before Little, Brown and Company published it in 1976. The thriller, about a Nashville journalist tracking down an

assassin, won the prestigious Edgar Award for best first novel from the Mystery Writers of America. Still, it sold only about 10,000 copies.

Since then, Patterson has built an expansive, lucrative empire that spans thrillers, science fiction, romance, graphic novels and even children's books. More than 305 million copies of his works are in print worldwide, and according to BookScan, 1 out of every 26 hardcover fiction books sold in 2013 was written by him. This year, he'll publish 17 new hardcovers. When he's not writing novels, he's launching his children's imprint, jimmy patterson, and advocating for children's literacy (he donated over \$1 million to independent bookstores with children's sections and gave \$1.5 million to school libraries). But his latest endeavor is particularly broad: teaching fiction to the masses.

Patterson, along with two-time Academy Award winner Dustin Hoffman and tennis phenom Serena Williams, is kicking off the highly produced online video service **MasterClass**, where you can learn from the world's best. Acting tips from Rain Man? Tennis secrets from the winner of 20 Grand Slam singles titles? The secret to becoming the world's best-selling author? I signed up for the third option. For \$90, you get lifetime access to each course; Patterson's includes 22 video lessons, a 40-page workbook and excerpts from some of his first drafts. Later this year, pop star Usher and photographer Annie Leibovitz will join the roster.

Patterson is the kind of guy who loves what he does so much that he declares, "I don't work for a living. I play for a living." In fact, one of the first things he tells me when we meet is that he's never looked at writing as a job. "A joke I'll make occasionally is, 'I don't have to sit there and interview James Patterson,'" he says with a laugh. "I don't have to do shit that I don't want to do." Four minutes into his second MasterClass lesson, titled "Passion + Habit," he shares advice his grandfather once gave him: "Whether you become the president or a surgeon or you drive a truck, as

I do, just remember that when you go over the mountain to work in the morning, you gotta be singing. I do. I'm singing every day," Patterson says in the video. "If it's all pain, there's something wrong."

Ah, shit, I think to myself.

Years ago, a mentor, David Hajdu, told me a story that made me feel a whole lot better about the special kind of dread I occasionally feel when I write. Every time he begins a challenging writing project, especially one that means a lot to him, there comes a point when he wants to quit. "I am convinced that I'm incompetent and a fraud, and I can't remember why I decided to make my living at something so torturous," he said. "I think, I want to be a mailman and have a nice route and spend my days delivering things and greeting my friendly customers." Those aren't the words of a frustrated writer with half a dozen partially finished manuscripts in the drawer; Hajdu is an award-winning author and serious journalist. He loves his work, as I love mine. But writing can be as agonizing as it is exhilarating. When Hajdu acknowledged that distinction, I stopped feeling quite so bad about feeling bad—and decided I would continue occasionally dreaming about frosting cakes for the rest of my life.

When I tell Patterson about Hajdu's story, he replies, "Sounds like bullshit to me."

Patterson, who has been **dubbed** "the Henry Ford of books," is revered as much as he is maligned for the rise of his brand. Highbrow literary types chastise him for churning out mediocre prose and cheap thrills and dis his stable of co-authors. Stephen King **described** him as a "terrible writer." Critic Patrick Anderson **called** his second Alex Cross novel, *Kiss the Girls*, "sick, sexist, sadistic and subliterate."

Yet Patterson's success is staggering. **Forbes** puts his career earnings at \$700 million over the past decade. "I just wish people would be a little more generous with.... It's just different kinds of ways to communicate," he tells me. "You

could take the harshest critic in the world—some real snot—and ask them to write out the two or three stories they tell to other people that they know are really good stories. And then read the fuckers. And they'll find there probably aren't any good sentences, but they are really good stories.”

Patterson calls his writing “colloquial storytelling,” and his MasterClass offers insights into his process, from killing off characters to working with co-authors and ensuring that readers know a book’s heroes and villains better than they know their own spouses. He also covers practical matters, such as how to get published and market your book. “I’m not setting out rules for people or telling them how to do it,” he says. “I’m just saying, ‘This is the way I do it, and some of these things may be helpful to you.’”

Patterson’s class is filled with snackable takeaways tailored to the aspiring writer, interesting to the avid reader and relevant to all creative types. Establishing a routine, he says, is paramount. He wrote *Berryman* between 5 and 7 a.m. while working at the international advertising agency J. Walter Thompson. Now he writes seven days a week, always on a yellow legal pad. His assistant types up his drafts and prints them, triple-spaced, so Patterson has room to edit by hand.

When it comes to plot, he says, go for “a story, not necessarily a lot of pretty sentences.” If you get stuck, write “TBD” and move on. And always break the rules. Patterson’s books often include the first and third person. “People say that’s cheating,” he says. “Did Moses come down with that? Was that the 11th [commandment]?”

In his first Michael Bennett book, *Step on a Crack*, readers meet Detective Bennett, a cop with 10 adopted children and a wife who’s dying of cancer. Oh, and armed men just held up the state funeral of a former first lady—where Bennett was in charge. “This is insane,” Patterson says. “A lot of writing professors would go, ‘Don’t do it. Don’t write that story.’ To me, that was a tremendous

challenge in terms of, No, I can do this.” (Some stories shouldn’t be written, though. Patterson calls his second book, *Season of the Machete*, about a psychopathic couple wreaking havoc on a tropical island, a “horror show. I’ve asked them to stop printing it.”)

My second “oh, shit” moment comes when Patterson holds up a blank legal pad, looks straight into the camera and says, “This is the enemy.” He won’t even start writing a book until he’s done three to six outlines. “That will save a lot of heartache. If you can’t write the outline, you probably can’t write the book,” he tells me. I immediately vow to never write an article without an outline. (Confession: I’ve gotten this far in the article without one and find myself wondering what would happen if I printed it, triple-spaced, and gave it to Patterson to edit.)

Still, Patterson is natural on camera and makes his class feel as if we’re all hanging out at the local coffee shop. And why not? As he puts it, “Let’s face it, I’m not writing *War and Peace*. I’m not writing *Ulysses*. But I always try to do the best I can possibly do.... You gotta aim for the stars with this stuff.”

01

MICKY MOUSE CLUB

Athens, Greece—Graffiti lampooning German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the European Union decorates a wall in Greece's capital on June 15. Talks between the EU and Greece about how to deal with the country's massive debt collapsed earlier this month. In response, the European Commission warned that Greece could default on its debt and fall into bankruptcy if Athens and its international creditors can't strike a deal within the next two weeks.



Milos Bicanski/Getty

02

A WRESTLER'S GRIP

Chicago—Dennis Hastert is escorted on June 9 to a courthouse where the former House speaker was arraigned on charges that he broke federal banking laws and lied to the FBI. Hastert, a former teacher and wrestling coach in Illinois, is accused of making illegal cash withdrawals to pay a former student \$3.5 million to not disclose that Hastert had sexually abused him. If convicted, Hastert could face up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.



Paul Beaty/AP

03

ME TOO-IST!

Miami—After months of speculation and fundraising, Jeb Bush officially jumped into the 2016 presidential race, making the announcement to supporters at Miami Dade College on June 15. He pledged to remove barriers to social mobility and tackle the economic concerns of the middle class. Bush joins a crowded Republican field of 10 candidates who have officially said they are running; a half-dozen others are expected to follow suit soon.



David Goldman/AP

04

SPRAY FOR GOOD NEWS

Seoul, South Korea—A worker sprays antiseptic solution as a precaution against the spread of Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) at a civic center on June 12. The MERS outbreak, which began in May, has killed 16 people and sparked widespread fears of further contagion. The South Korean economy has suffered as consumers have stayed indoors, driving retail sales down by 17 percent. Baseball teams have played to empty stadiums, and tourists have canceled their vacations. South Korean President Park Geun-hye recently called off a diplomatic trip to the U.S. to address the crisis, urging citizens to shop and trust the government in its quarantine efforts.



Lee Jin-man/AP